Statement by

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On behalf of Afghanistan, Algeria, Ghana, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Morocco, Pakistan, and Tunisia
I - Difficult International Context

Our meeting is taking place in a difficult global economic context characterized by a stubborn financial crisis and anemic global economic growth that raise the specter of another recession.

Indeed, many economic activity indicators are deteriorating, not only in Europe and the United States, but also in a number of emerging countries. In a large number of developing countries, tourism, foreign direct investment, and trade are declining and financing sources are drying up.

The shift from private debt to public debt and the ensuing public finance problems, the lack of regulation of the international financial markets, and the financial reforms that have not yet been fully implemented are all factors, which, in combination, have hampered the resumption of global growth. Moreover, the global economy is wracked by other crises linked to the price volatility of petroleum products and foodstuff, along with other commodities, as well as the recurrence of natural disasters resulting from climate change.

In this context where the global economy is grappling with a cavalcade of crises, public authorities have limited leeway, and populations, particularly young people who are achieving higher levels of education and facing unemployment, are calling for a more inclusive and just society that meets their needs with respect to equality, decent employment, and well-being.

In light of these new needs, the recommendations and the relevance of the key messages in the reports prepared by the Bank will clearly lead to the strengthening our institution’s expertise and knowledge so as to support public policies aimed at addressing unemployment, insecurity, and natural disasters.

II - Good jobs: fair compensation of individuals, positive effects on economic and social development, trust, and social cohesion

The global economic downturn will probably hamper the immediate recovery of the labor market from the problems that have plagued it since the start of the crisis. Recent figures put the number of unemployed at over 200 million in 2012. Should conditions deteriorate further, more than 209 million persons could be impacted by 2013.

Added to this are the more than 1.5 billion persons who hold insecure and poorly compensated jobs, and who are exploited or treated in a manner that violates their human dignity.

In this regard, we agree with the World Bank that efforts to address the employment problem do not entail merely job creation but also the creation of good jobs. An effective employment strategy must
target the creation of stable, well-paying jobs, the reduction of poverty and inequality, and the strengthening of production clusters and social cohesion.

To this end, the Bank’s World Development Report stresses factors that contribute to the creation of good jobs and impact the creation of such jobs, in particular the respective roles of the public and private sectors, the informal sector, self-employment, and labor market regulation.

Against this backdrop, the report underscores the role that the World Bank must play in order to assist the member countries concerned to identify priorities and guide decisions related to the implementation of innovative policies that can create decent jobs and foster economic and social development.

Consequently, our institution must therefore implement innovative analytical tools to facilitate the intersectoral assessments of various forms of employment in the context of a coherent and integrated vision, based on the sharing of knowledge derived from the practical experiences of each member country.

Moreover, our Bank is being called upon to build partnerships with other international development actors with the aim of strengthening the capacity of countries to create good jobs for the millions of young men and women in search of employment and decent living conditions.

**III - Despite significant improvements in a number of gender indicators, much remains to be done to achieve true gender equality**

We wholeheartedly welcome the work done by the World Bank’s experts to assess the progress made in this area since the publication in 2011 of the World Development Report, which focused on gender equality and recommended strategic directions in order to better address this issue.

Since the publication of this report, the World Bank has made significant progress on the gender front. By way of example, gender has been mainstreamed into country assistance strategies and the share of gender-informed loans increased significantly from 54 percent in 2010 to 83 percent in 2012.

However, despite strides made by member countries in gender equality, much remains to be done, particularly with respect to fair and equitable participation by women in policy making, greater representation of women on elected bodies, and the promotion of opportunities to increase access to good jobs for women.

In order to bridge the gaps and address the challenges, gender equality must remain a priority in the World Bank’s strategic programs, and the Bank must continue to sharpen the gender focus in its operations, taking the economic, social, and cultural specificities of its member countries into account. This will require a special effort from the World Bank to support national policies, through scaling up of resources allocated to this issue and the promotion of effective partnerships with other international institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

We are mindful of the fact that promoting gender equality is a long-term process requiring the efforts of all development partners. We therefore recommend the implementation of a long-term action plan to facilitate assessment of progress made and make any adjustments needed to resolve this issue.
IV - Managing disaster risks: the ability of public policies to facilitate informed decision making by focusing on prevention

The issue of disaster risk management is more relevant than ever before. Recurring natural disasters resulting primarily from climate change now requires us to include disaster risk management in all aspects of development.

As we have noted in recent years, although low-income countries have experienced relatively fewer disasters than developed countries, they nonetheless have had as many victims and experienced as much damage as these countries.

This is especially alarming as natural disasters, apart from their devastating impact on vulnerable populations, heighten the pervasive sense of social and economic injustice among this group and reinforce their marginalization, thus creating fertile ground for social conflict and turmoil.

To that end, we agree with the World Bank experts who contend that mainstreaming disaster risk management into development strategies can reverse the current trend of rising disaster impact on the development of these countries. Prevention policies can save lives and assets, because prevention is possible and often less costly than post-disaster response measures.

However, it is regrettable that many countries lack the expertise and resources needed to undertake risk management prevention and assess the potential impact of adverse natural events on their political, economic, and social decisions.

Strong World Bank support to help these countries implement a disaster risk prevention policy will therefore be required. The World Bank’s comparative advantage lies in its great ability to offer a combination of tools and resources and expertise in implementing risk reduction and reconstruction operations.

In light of recurring natural disasters, the World Bank is also being called upon to boost climate and clean technology funds, particularly with respect to solar and wind energy.