Statement by

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It is a great honor to be here among you, for the first time, to pledge France’s ongoing commitment to the values and benefits of multilateralism. The World Bank—and the other institutions represented here today—show how we can achieve much more when we work together, as a global community, than when we act alone. For as long as the World Bank continues to serve those most in need, it can count on France’s unwavering support.

These Meetings are a chance for us to review our priorities. We attach great importance to how the Bank is resourced, managed and governed, as it seeks to action the measures set out in its strategy document—“Forward Look – A Vision for the World Bank Group in 2030”—and leverage private investment for development. Implementing the Bank’s development assistance strategy on the ground is another priority. I am particularly pleased that the Bank has opted to make education the focus of its annual World Development Report. There is a pressing need to step up our efforts on this front in many parts of the world, and France intends to make education a focal point of its official development assistance policy. Before I address this subject in detail, I would like to touch on other, more institutional and strategic matters.

First of all, I wish to commend the progress made to date on the implementation of our commonly agreed priorities. In particular, I welcome the IDA18 replenishment, which leaves the International Development Association (IDA) well-placed to scale up its work in fragile and conflict-affected states. We will need to see sufficient human and material resources on the ground to make this additional funding work for the world’s poorest countries. It is our collective duty to support the World Bank’s efforts. Only by working together can we bring about meaningful change. The Alliance for the Sahel is a prime example of coordination in action—a group of donors determined to accelerate progress towards development goals in the region, focusing on a narrow set of priorities and on aid effectiveness. This collective effort will be decisive in addressing urgent security and economic vulnerabilities and should act as a catalyst for the region’s development. I am also pleased to see that encouraging progress is being made on climate change. The figures indicate that the World Bank is taking its responsibilities on this issue seriously. Yet further efforts are needed if the Bank is to achieve, and exceed, its target to devote 28% of funding to climate issues by 2020. This would be a step—albeit a first step—in the right direction. Recurring extreme—and destructive—weather events show that we are fighting an existential battle. My thoughts are with the victims of the recent hurricanes in America and the Caribbean. I can reassure them that France will continue to support ongoing reconstruction efforts. And finally, I want to pay tribute to the World Bank’s work on gender equality, especially in education and health.

The question of the World Bank’s financial capacity to address these challenges is pending. We should treat the postponement of the capital increase decision to Spring 2018 as an opportunity—to weigh up our options and come up with a coherent package of measures to help shore up the Bank’s finances for the long term. Balance sheet optimization should, of course, remain a matter of ongoing concern. But France believes that much could be gained from budgetary discipline and differentiated pricing, too.
Whether this package of measures includes a capital increase—and if so, to what extent—will be a matter for the Bank’s shareholders. And shareholders must listen to the voices of citizens who, quite rightly, want to see their money being allocated where it is needed most and spent as efficiently as possible.

**On the subject of resource allocation**, the Bank’s priority must be to serve the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people—those for whom climate, security, economic and health shocks have the greatest impact. I am delighted that **IDA has stepped up its efforts**, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel, where conditions remain fragile for many and varied reasons. And I welcome the new private sector window, which should strengthen the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) activity in the region, too. The **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) also has a role to play in bringing about this paradigm shift**—by channeling more funds to lower middle-income economies and introducing an effective graduation procedure that gives countries loans and instruments that are appropriate to their situation, income and market access and, ultimately, sets them on the path towards financial autonomy. We must remain mindful of the Bank’s mission—to help countries help themselves.

**Turning to efficiency**, the World Bank Group needs to show how its lending decisions—across all Group entities—adhere to the principle of “additionality”. In other words, every single intervention must be impossible to realize without public funding. The World Bank’s “cascade approach”—an essential feature of a development bank’s mandate—is vital in this regard. I welcome the fact that the Bank’s leadership team is determined to develop this approach further. And I applaud the IFC’s new strategy to create markets.

I would like to return to the theme of the World Development Report—education.

Right now, **more than 250 million school-age children** are not enrolled in school—a figure that has changed little in the past 10 years. Around 30% of children from the poorest families in low-income countries have never attended school. And there are scores of children in school but learning little. This situation should serve as a wake-up call to us all. The World Bank’s 2018 World Development Report warns of a “learning crisis” in global education and maps out possible solutions to this crisis.

Never before have educational standards come under such scrutiny. Investing in education is the best way to achieve human, social and economic development. But if children leave school unable to master the three core skills—reading, writing and arithmetic—then our investment will have gone to waste.

We already have the empirical knowledge, scientific data and innovative teaching methods to guarantee learning for all. We must harness research in neuroscience, linguistics, teaching and learning, and other cognitive and social sciences to drive up standards in our schools. The World Bank has argued this case admirably in its report. I hope the message will be heard.

The Bank must sustain its efforts on education—on addressing the learning crisis and on securing additional funding for the sector.

The Bank estimates that low-income and middle-income countries need around $40 billion more each year to guarantee high-quality education for all by 2030. Investing more in education will drive progress towards the international community’s other goals for 2030, attracting even more investment in health, gender equality, peace and climate change initiatives.

France will remain steadfast in its efforts to mobilize donor funding to tackle these immense and pressing needs. That is why, at the United Nations General Assembly, the Presidents of France and Senegal agreed to co-host the Global Partnership for Education’s financing conference in Dakar, in February next year.
If we are to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world—to pass on the knowledge, skills and values that future generations will need to shape a fair and prosperous society for the 21st century—we must invest in education and raise standards in our schools.

The 2018 World Development Report makes this case loud and clear—2018 will be the year of education, the year of hope for our young people.

We can only fulfill these hopes if national governments make education a priority and channel more tax receipts directly into the classroom. Low-income countries naturally require financial support. But they also need technical assistance, especially on assessing learning outcomes. France is doing precisely this by supporting the Program on the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC), an initiative of the Conference of Francophone Education Ministers (CONFEMEN). The World Bank’s Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative follows in the same vein, collecting and analyzing data on education systems, policies and institutions.

We must harness this data to help change agents—national education ministries, senior public officials and teachers—address the many structural challenges they face. System governance and teacher training and management are instrumental in raising educational standards. Furthermore, a school’s climate can have a decisive impact on student learning. Every school should be a safe environment. Sadly, that is not always the case. There are many schools, especially in conflict-affected countries, where children are not safe. School-related gender-based violence, for example, is a leading cause of drop-out among girls.

Enhancing learning outcomes calls for reforms and policy interventions at every level of the education system. We stand ready to do everything we can, together, to make this happen.

President Kim, the learning crisis raises important questions for us all. I want to thank you for tackling this issue head-on. France has every confidence in your ability to rise to the challenge.