

# International Community Should ‘Prepare for Peace’ in Syria and Throughout Region — World Bank Group President

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BEIRUT, June 3, 2014- While the war in Syria shows no sign of abating, World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim today told an audience of students and policymakers that it was time to “prepare for peace” in Syria and surrounding countries, citing similar efforts that began 70 years ago before the end of World War II.

“No one knows how or when this war in Syria will end – and sadly there are no signs of it ending anytime soon,” Kim said in a speech at the Ministry of Education in Beirut during a four-day trip to the Middle East. “But this is exactly the right time for us to prepare for the peace that surely will come. The international community, including the World Bank Group, the United Nations, and key donors, must put together a plan that will help not only Syria rebuild, but also will help Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq recover from the massive spillover effects of the war.”

In his speech, Kim spoke about the extensive planning for rebuilding Europe that began in 1944, even though there were no signs then that World War II was ending.

“Let me take you back to 70 years ago, to 1944, while the guns were still firing during World War II,” Kim said. “It was difficult to envision peace then – Europe was experiencing a scale of human tragedy that dimmed the hopes of Europeans the same age as you.”

But the international community started planning for Europe’s recovery and then spent billions of dollars in rebuilding the region when the war ended. The recovery was swift. Europe’s economic output in 1951 was 35 percent higher than before the war, he said. “We

know that it's possible to build back better, even after the most devastating conflicts.”

“Today can be the 1944 moment for Syria and for the entire Arab world,” Kim said.

“Today must be the day that the international community, led by Arab leaders, begins preparing for peace and economic opportunities in Syria and lays the groundwork for a more prosperous future for all people in this region.”

The World Bank Group President said that the plan to rebuild must include good governance, inclusive growth, sustainability, and quality education and health care.

He made a special point in thanking Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq for their role in taking in Syrian refugees. He said their generosity should be acknowledged around the world. In particular, he cited the extraordinary efforts made by Lebanon and Jordan, which together account for opening their borders to nearly 2 million refugees.

Kim acknowledged that many people might be skeptical of a hopeful message involving the future of Syria, but he argued that the seeds of transparency, citizen involvement, and the demand for more jobs have been planted throughout the region. He said the region's 100 million young people represented a possible positive force for growth, as long as countries invested in their education and the right environment to create jobs.

He said the World Bank Group, in particular, was actively pushing a strategy of regional integration that could bring great economic prosperity.

“This region is no different from any other,” Kim said. “Peace, stability, growth and opportunities come when people and countries realize that they have a common interest in living, developing and thriving together, irrespective of national, ethnic or sectarian divisions. In this region, integration is the key.”

Discussions with government officials focused on Lebanon's longer-term development program and the World Bank's sustained engagement. Kim confirmed the Bank's commitment to garnering support from the international community for Lebanon, saying this would include updating its recent economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian crisis.

In his meeting with the donor community, Kim urged representatives to contribute—quickly and generously—to a World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund, set up to gather grant financing for development projects to help build the economic resilience of Lebanese communities hosting more than a million Syrian refugees, as well as mitigating threats to Lebanon's fiscal stability. “The world needs to come to Lebanon's rescue as it cannot be left to confront the deep challenges on its own for a conflict that is not of its making,” said Kim.

The World Bank Group President visited a local school in Beirut to see for himself the impact of the Syrian conflict on the Lebanese public education system, where the sharp increase in demand for education arising from the large numbers of Syrian child refugees,

has led to mounting costs, adverse effects on the quality of education, double teaching shifts and a huge need for non-formal education.

World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim's visit to Lebanon is part of a three-country trip to the Middle East which included a stop in Saudi Arabia and will include a stop in Jordan.

### About the World Bank Group

The World Bank Group plays a key role in the global effort to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity. It consists of five institutions: the World Bank, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA); the International Finance Corporation (IFC); the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Working together in more than 100 countries, these institutions provide financing, advice, and other solutions that enable countries to address the most urgent challenges of development. For more information, please visit [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org), [www.miga.org](http://www.miga.org), and [ifc.org](http://ifc.org).

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