I am very happy to greet you at this 4th World Congress of Education International and I want to say how very grateful I am to Mary Hatwood Futrell, Fred van Leeuwen and other colleagues whom I met last December here in Washington, and for the work that has taken place in these last months and for this invitation.

I should quickly tell you that the reason that I am not there is not because of my fear of Porto Alegre, although you might understand that this is the case given the history of Porto Alegre, but it is because I had previously made commitments that I simply couldn't get out of. I am delighted that my Senior Vice-President Jean-Louis Sarbib will be with you along with some other colleagues to participate in the meetings.

The first thing I’d like to say is that I think that the December Meeting was extremely important. It was a little difficult – "I might add" but it was important because what it brought home to me was the very close identity between the objectives of our institution and the objectives of Education International. I think each of us has, at the centre of our worlds, the notion that high quality education for our children is essential. I think each of us recognizes that the transmission mechanism for that - "more than anything else" is the quality of the teachers and the consistency of teaching that goes into the training of our young people.

In our own institution, in these last three years, we put out one billion eight hundred million dollars for education - about double what we spent in the prior three years. But more than the money, there is a huge recognition here that this problem of bringing all children into school, and the equally dramatic problem of lifting the level of quality, not just in primary schools but throughout the whole range of education, is at the core of development itself. Particularly it is related to women but not alone in relation to women. We’ve had the opportunity, in these last six months, of working with your colleagues in trying to do some research and establishing a research program which deals with the elements of what makes good conditions for teachers: dealing with issues of pensions, dealing with issues of contract teaching and dealing with the question that we’ll face in terms of bringing along a hundred million children that are not in school. As we think of perhaps thirty children in a class, that means three million new teachers who will need to be added to the system.

We also, for our part, need to think in terms of the financing of the education system and we also need to say to you - to all of you - that this bringing together of the education system together with the financial system is something where "no doubt" there will be important areas in which trust between us will be very important. Trust that relates to the question of funding in governments, trust that relates to the issue of budgets, and trust that relates to the interdependence that must be felt between the education system and the development process. I want you also to know that although we have been talking significantly about primary school education, it is not just primary school education that we believe needs addressing. It is very clear to us that, for example, in Uganda when you get a million new students into school in primary school system, almost immediately you need 50 000 more places in the first year for secondary school. It is also very clear to us that when you have children in primary and secondary schools you need universities and teachers training colleges in order to give the support to the teaching profession that it needs to maintain values. We also know very well that conditions of employment, certainty of
employment and the ability to count on the financial rewards necessary to allow teachers to develop themselves, are all part of the development partnership that must exist between teachers and governments. From the World Bank’s point of view, we are extraordinarily anxious to work with you, in every way that we can, to try and balance all these objectives: the balance of teachers and the quality of their work and the rewards that they reach, and the need for the financial sustenance and support of governments.

This inherent tension may not always be easy for us to overcome.

But it is my belief that, since both your organization and our’s are committed to the same objective, that we represent hope for working together, to influence governments, to bring about appropriate budget support and to ensure the continuity for equality education that is required from primary school to university level.

My colleagues and I at the Bank are really thrilled that we have this building relationship between our institution and your’s. I want to say to you that we’re extraordinarily grateful for the chance to work with you and that we’re committed to a very open and transparent dialogue for the benefit of our children, for generations to come.

Thank you for the invitation to address to you and I look forward to meeting many of you in person before too long.