

## World Bank and IMF Meet in Washington



**AP**

International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde speaks to reporters at the IMF and World Bank Group spring meetings

This is the VOA Special English Economics Report.

Representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have gathered in Washington. World Bank President Robert Zoelick spoke to them on Thursday. This is the last time he attends the spring meetings of the two organizations as World Bank president. Earlier this week, Jim Yong Kim was officially chosen as the bank's twelfth president.

Mr. Zoelick said developing countries are now engines of growth.

"Developing countries have provided two thirds of global growth over the past five years," he said. But he added that many developing nations still face big problems. He said all members need to work together better "for their common interest."

The United States traditionally chooses the World Bank head and Europe chooses the IMF chief. But developing nations want more influence.

The World Bank is a development agency. The IMF supports monetary cooperation and provides loans.

IMF chief Christine Lagarde announced Thursday that her group has received promises of over three hundred twenty billion dollars. The money would help nations in trouble. She also said developing nations, what are called the emerging markets, needed to do more.

CHRISTINE LAGARDE: "If you look at, for instance, the emerging markets. They, too, have to address some of their issues. They, too, have to be very attentive to a volatile market situation. And that means, for some of these emerging markets, refocusing on their domestic growth."

Ms. Lagarde said emerging markets need to work toward growth and building demand. But that requires resources.

Two issues are access to banks and safety nets. The World Bank says three-fourths of the poor have no access to banks. That means no savings in their communities to finance growth. The problem is greater for women. Poor women are twenty-eight percent less likely to have bank accounts than poor men.

Social programs are also needed. Sixty percent of the developing world cannot depend on social programs to protect citizens from hunger or provide services in crises. As a result, experts have called for safety nets.

ROBERT ZOELLICK: "And for the poorest, let's focus on basic safety nets for every country to deal with the volatility and uncertainty because the other lesson we learned is if you wait until a crisis, it's too late."

And rich nations have a lot to learn from developing ones. Mr. Zoellick said programs in Brazil and Mexico are not costly, but help millions.

Finally this week, the World Bank Group welcomed its newest member: South Sudan. The nation received its first grant of nine million dollars. The money is to help create jobs and provide financial services.

And that's the VOA Special English Economics Report. I'm June Simms.