The new World Bank president should strive to make a difference in Africa

By JEFFREY D. SACHS
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I am seeking to become president of the World Bank because I want to help make a difference in the fight against poverty.

Many governments in Africa and elsewhere have expressed their support for my candidacy and I am seeking the support of my own government, the United States, as well.

I am campaigning in public for this position because I want my candidacy to depend on what I stand for and what I will do, not on backroom deals.

I stand for the idea that we as a generation can decide to end extreme poverty, and that our shared efforts can get the job done.

Many people around the world support that bold view. Others believe that poor nations should fend for themselves, that one nation’s challenges are not relevant a continent away.

And there are still those who believe that private business will solve all problems without any shared efforts by government, civil society, and business.

A dozen years ago I was with the leaders of the pharmaceutical industry at a big annual business meeting.

The head of one of the world’s largest drug companies complained that his company was being attacked for not caring about the Aids pandemic in Africa.

He said his company had shipped medicine to Africa, but that it was sitting at the port in Mombasa, not being used. He did not understand what to do.

I made this point to him: his company knew how to make miraculous antiretroviral drugs that could keep an HIV-infected person alive, but it did not know how to get those drugs to poor people in Africa’s villages.

I said what we needed was to mobilise governments and civil society to work alongside the companies.

I promoted the idea of a new global financial organisation to help distribute the anti-Aids and anti-malaria medicines to the poor.
Out of these ideas and those of others arose, first the Global Fund to Fight Aids, TB, and Malaria, then the US President’s Emergency Plan for Aids Relief and similar programmes by the World Bank.

Millions of people are alive today because of these programmes. These life-and-death issues cannot be left to private business alone.

For those few who say that as an American I should not be involved in some other country’s problems, I respond with my belief that as human beings we are part of humanity first, and part of our nations after that.

As humanity, we suffer when others suffer, and we improve our lot when others improve their lot as well.

I seek the presidency of the World Bank because I know that together we can change the world for the better, especially for the poor.

As World Bank president, I would be committed to ending extreme poverty in our time.

I would be committed to using the advances of science and technology to solve the problems of poverty, hunger, and disease. I would promote Africa’s Green Revolution since I know that smallholder farmers, if given the right kind of support, can feed the continent and even help feed the world.

These things can be done. They are already being done by many dynamic African leaders, communities, and nations. Yet more can be done, and done even faster to relieve suffering, build economies, and help Africa to take its place among the world’s most dynamic emerging economies.

Ending extreme poverty builds on leadership and partnership. The key steps needed are not costly and, in fact, depend much more on ideas, technologies, and goodwill than they do on dollars.

The market system and Africa’s young entrepreneurs and scientists will make huge contributions to the future wellbeing of their society.

Our potential for still greater success — to control Aids, grow more food, support business development, and sooner rather than later end the need for development aid — has been my main point of emphasis throughout my career.

Our ideas and knowledge can help to make a better world. As president of the World Bank, I would bring three decades of knowledge, training, and first-hand experience in more than 125 countries, to the cause.

Help me to do this by speaking out for a World Bank that can really make a difference, that works for the poor, and that believes and acts in the common cause of humanity.
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