

World Bank proposes global epidemic fund in wake of Ebola

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World Bank chief Jim Yong Kim warned Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in west Africa could trigger famine, and called for the creation of an international emergency fund for epidemics.

Speaking to German business newspaper Handelsblatt, Kim said that one in four farmers in the most affected countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea had stopped planting their fields.

"In one year, we could be grappling with a famine," he said.

Kim called for a "global accord, orchestrated by the World Bank or another organisation" to "provide funds in case of a pandemic emergency".

He said the project could work along the lines of aid from the International Monetary Fund or World Bank for countries stricken by financial crises or natural disasters, financed by member states.

"Rich countries commit to more, poorer to less. But everyone can play their part," he was quoted as saying.

"I consider it my moral duty to complete this project during my term in office."

Kim, a physician by training who specialised in infectious disease, assumed the presidency of the World Bank in 2012.

The World Health Organization announced on Friday that the Ebola outbreak—almost entirely confined to west Africa—has killed 5,177 people and infected around 14,500 since Ebola emerged in Guinea in December.

Kim said the financial aid raised so far to grapple with the Ebola crisis was "totally inadequate" but praised the "spectacular engagement" of the United States and Britain.

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