

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

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THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE 2012 LAUREATE ANNOUNCEMENT CEREMONY

REMARKS BY
AMBASSADOR KENNETH M. QUINN

JUNE 12, 2012

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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2012 Laureate Announcement Ceremony June 12, U.S. Department of State

Secretary Clinton, on behalf of all of us at the World Food Prize, I want to extend our heartfelt appreciation to you for your willingness to preside at our Laureate Announcement Ceremony for four consecutive years. I still vividly recall being here in June 2009 for the first such occasion. It was very special in several respects. First, you took the opportunity at that event to articulate the principles upon which the Feed the Future initiative would be developed. It was an exciting moment and, in retrospect, even more so given the amazing progress which has taken place in the past three years and which culminated with President Obama's speech at the Chicago Council symposium on May 18, followed by the meeting of the G-8.

The second aspect of that June 2009 World Food Prize announcement was what it meant to our founder Dr. Norman Borlaug. Even though he was in the last few months of his life, Dr. Borlaug was still intensely engaged in the effort to bring the Green Revolution to Africa. He had become fearful that there would not be the energy and direction needed to accomplish this goal after he departed from the scene. Your words and the leadership you provided gave him great hope that the goal that he had dreamed of would be accomplished. It was for that reason that I was so pleased and honored to be able to present to Secretary Clinton earlier this morning a replica of the Congressional Gold Medal, our country's highest civilian honor, which Dr. Borlaug received in 2007. I hope that it will forever be a reminder of the enormous respect and gratitude that Dr. Borlaug and all of us at the World Food Prize have for the leadership which you have provided on the issue of confronting global hunger. In my view, no other Secretary of State has a record that could equal what you have accomplished.

It is, perhaps, also noteworthy to mention that Dr. Borlaug had planned to be here that June for the announcement. We all were then going to travel to your hometown, Chicago, where he was going to throw out the first pitch at a Cubs game at Wrigley Field on June 13. Dr. Borlaug felt he had played a role in eliminating the Curse of the Bambino from Fenway Park, and was now hoping to do the same with the Curse of the Billy Goat which has long haunted Cubs fans for several generations. Unfortunately, his failing health kept him away. It is meaningful to note that even though the Cubs have not done very well since then, you have had an amazing run of success as Secretary of State.

Administrator Shah, I too want to express our great appreciation to you for your longtime friendship to the World Food Prize and the special relationship that you enjoyed with Dr. Borlaug. I still vividly recall having introduced you to Dr. Borlaug at our World Food Prize international symposium in 2006. That connection played a special part in the development of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

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plan for promoting global agriculture. And I know Dr. Borlaug was immensely encouraged by the role that you have played, both at the Gates Foundation, later at USDA and now at AID.

It is particularly auspicious that we come together between two great anniversaries that would have meant the world to Dr. Borlaug: May 15, which marked the 150th anniversary of the establishment of USDA and June 26, which will mark the sesquicentennial observance of the Morrill Act, which led to the establishment of the Land Grant college system across America. We are so very pleased that Dr. Peter McPherson, the President of APLU and a member of the World Food Prize Council of Advisors, could be with us today. And Secretary Vilsack has the only excuse that Dr. Borlaug would have found compelling for his not being here: He's out visiting the farmers in Iowa.

Dr. Borlaug is in my view the most illustrious alumnus of both USDA and the Land Grant system, having graduated from – it is hard for an Iowan to say this – the University of Minnesota and then worked at the U.S. Forest Service before beginning his career as a plant pathologist in Mexico.

In creating the World Food Prize, Dr. Borlaug hoped it would come to be seen as the “Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture,” inspiring those breakthrough achievements which will be needed if our planet is to have sufficient nutritious food for all 9 billion inhabitants projects by the year 2050.

But Dr. Borlaug also had another view of the role that the World Food Prize could play, which he demonstrated when he worked with both India and Pakistan in the mid 60s to change their approach to agriculture even though they were engaged in hostilities and were deeply divided politically. From my own diplomatic career and from working with Dr. Borlaug for a decade, I have come to see that: “Confronting hunger can bring diverse people together across even the broadest political, ethnic, religious or diplomatic differences.”

It is with this lesson in mind that I note that our 2012 World Food Prize Laureate is an individual whose work and whose motivation has been to bridge such gaps and divisions in the Middle East, developing a new technology in Israel which could allow arid regions and deserts to become fertile and productive. Working in the highland of the Negev desert, he conceived of the idea of transforming the way that scarce amounts of water could be brought to crops in order to enhance their survivability and productivity. Over several decades at the Hebrew University and other institutions, he worked with other irrigation specialists to develop a radical new system of micro-irrigation which totally transformed farming in dryland areas.

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With a personal zeal for using this breakthrough achievement to build greater understanding and to promote peace in the region, he collaborated with an array of experts in Middle Eastern countries and attained great standing and respect. Indeed, several of the letters supporting his nomination came from institutions in ____ and _____. Since then, this approach to water conservation and utilization has been spread around the world, impacting millions and millions of farmers and producers. It is therefore with enormous pride that I announce today that the 2012 World Food Prize Laureate is Dr. Daniel Hillel of Israel.

The World Food Prize will be presented to Dr. Hillel at a ceremony at the magnificent Iowa State Capitol on the evening of October 18. I want to extend the warmest possible invitation to everyone present today to join us at that ceremony and also for our Borlaug Dialogue symposium, which this year is entitled: "Partnership and Priorities: Transforming the Global Food Security Agenda." As you leave, you will receive a brochure with information about the event and how you can register. At this time, I wish to introduce Dr. Rajiv Shah, the Administrator of USAID for his comments.