ADDRESS TO HOUSE OF LORDS, HOSTED BY LORD ALTON OF LIVERPOOL, STEVEN KRULIS CHAMPION OF HUMANITY CEREMONY

BY AMBASSADOR KENNETH M. QUINN

Transcript – address as delivered

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Thank you Steve. Thank you. Well, Lord Alton, thank you so much for organizing and hosting this event. On behalf of my wife Le Son, our daughter Kelly, who is here - I'd like to point out she is a citizen of the world, born in Austria, went to school in the US, but she came here to have a masters degree about 15 years ago, and fell in love with your country. And I think, as or even more significantly, fell in love with her husband, Dan - and has been here ever since, and is now a British subject.

So we're very, very proud of that. Dan's mother, Sue, and Barbara Scott are here from Lymington, so our family extended.

So I want to say a special word about Sir Gordon Conway who has been a member of my council of advisors at the World Food Prize. We are so thrilled he could join us today, and Tsitsi Masiyiwa, who is here too. Her husband, Strive Masiyiwa, is also a member of our council of advisors. I want to introduce three other participants in the World Food Prize who are here, Catherine and Adam and Sam, where are you? Put your hands up. Back here, there they are.

When they were about 15 years old they came to the World Food Prize Youth Institute and then I sent them off, you know, their parents were worried, but they were 16 or 17, to India, Peru and Turkey, for eight weeks working with international agricultural research centres. They are now here in the UK studying to get advanced degrees. We're so proud of them, that they've been launched in this direction.

Honourable Tom Tugendhat, thank you. Sir Trevor, Lords, Baronesses, Members of Parliament who are here, what an honour this is for me. In

Africa they say "all protocols observed", which means, "If I forgot you, you're covered and you can't hold it against me!"

Going to Rwanda - and this was my second trip - being in the Kigali Genocide Memorial there; coming to the National Holocaust Museum in Nottinghamshire; and then being here to speak about Cambodia, really brings home how in the 20th Century those three genocides - close to ten million victims - and this indelible stain on human history. And it brings home why it's so absolutely critical to be doing things to ameliorate the after-effects and to prevent genocides from ever taking place again.

Now I have to say, Lord Alton, you have made my dream come true by being here with this event.

And my dream was - Shai Kim is here from the American Embassy, so will relate to this:

I come from Iowa, well I was born in the Bronx and I moved to Iowa when I was a teenager, that's why I'm an 'adopted' son of Iowa. But when you're from Iowa, going to school in a little town, and you think of becoming a diplomat: you pass all the tests somehow, I show up in Washington and I go for the interview - and I said, "You don't have to tell me, where I'm going is London or Paris, or Vienna if I have to!" I was 25 years old, and they said, "You're single, you're still draft-eligible, you haven't been in the military...".

And before I knew what happened, I was being trained in Vietnamese, in the back of a single-engine plane landing on a gravel road in the Mekong Delta. They pull over, they don't stop the engine, they open the door, threw my bag out, and they said, "We'll be back to get you in 18 months, if you're still alive, and then you can go on to your career."

They were going to send me to Harvard to study Labour relations and be assigned someplace in Western Europe. So that was my future.

So I'm out working in eight villages, with no background in agriculture whatsoever. And in these - we're trying to promote economic development

and defeat the insurgent Vietcong who were underground - two things were happening, just by chance.

We were upgrading this old dirt road, farm-to-market road that ran through all eight villages. And the first miracle crops - that Gordon Conway knows about - were arriving, the miracle rice, IR8 rice, arriving from the Philippines. And it was incredible. The rice could grow in half the time, so a farmer who's just a subsistence farmer now could have two crops and grow some melons, and uplift his family, her family – dramatically and in a short period of time.

And so, we fixed the road through about four of the villages, the agricultural workers were there trying to convince farmers what to do and to use these new crops.

And I observed that it was only in those villages where we fixed the road that farmers used the new rice. And the impact was immediate and dramatic. And all these things – child mortality goes down, nutrition goes up, and – unexpectedly – security improves.

The road and the new rice undercut the Vietcong in a way that we couldn't with bombs, bullets and boots on the ground.

And suddenly, you can go to these villages. Day and night, without insecurity. The other four villages - with no good road - everything was the same, and insecure.

So this was, you know, 12,000 miles from home - I now understood suddenly how my own country was transformed: it was building roads and new agricultural crops.

And so, I wrote to the State Department and said, "I don't want to go to Harvard. I don't want to work in Western Europe on Labour relations. I want to stay in Vietnam."

Now, I'm sure in the British foreign service, when there are such clear signs of mental instability, you're brought home right away! But they were

desperate for people to stay in Vietnam and they left me there. I stayed five and a half years, I met my wife - who was then my fiancée - and I was, in 1973, out wandering along the Vietnam / Cambodian border. I was gathering information: I'd sit at night, write it long-hand, once a week, a plane would land, and I'd give the pilot my reports to fly off to the regional capital - where they'd be typed up and dispatched.

And my fiancée – she's a Saigon girl, you can tell there, you know – she comes down to see me, and I take her out to show her around. What do you do in Chau Duc, on the border with Cambodia? You go up this nearby mountain, and you climb up, and you can see all the way into Cambodia - forty, fifty miles.

And it's a Saturday in June 1973. We get up there and I say, "Look. Look!" You can see all the way into Cambodia.

And there, in front of us, was not just these green rice fields, but these plumes of black smoke - 40, 50, 60 - everywhere, in every direction, plumes of black smoke going up.

What could it be? We had no idea. We had never seen anything like that. But over the next several days, what became apparent was, from refugees fleeing into Vietnam that I went and interviewed, was that at that same moment, in every village, the rebels - who had been sort of boy-scout revolutionaries before - suddenly became the Khmer Rouge.

And these young cadres took off their masks, as it were, pulled out their guns, and told everybody, "Stand up, drop everything, and walk out of your village. You're going out to a new life in the jungles, where you're going to build new structures and you're going to be part of these communal labour battalions."

And as people were quaking and walking out, they said, "Just to be sure you understand that this, that you can never come back, that it can never be reversed," they set alight every village. Houses there were all built of wood and thatch. They just went up - every village was burning - all

implementing Pol Pot's design to create this pure society; to eliminate everybody who didn't fit in it.

And the man who was organizing this was Ta Mok. So I gathered information, interviewing people everywhere I could get it and assembled in this 40-page report.

The pilot came, I handed it to him, they typed it up, sent it off, and: no-one believed me.

And so then when Phnom Penh was taken, 14 months later, the entire population there, people like Sokphal, who's here today – thank you so much for being here, we were talking about all that he went through – were all marched out of Phnom Penh.

And as they were marched out, slowly, they were taken off to be sorted. And the sort was done by these young cadres. There was only two things; if you were going to be put to work, you go here; if not, you're going to be put to death, you go there.

One minister of the government told me how he was being sorted, that because he had glasses, they said, "You have glasses, you're educated, you will die."

That is what happened to everybody with glasses. Who's got glasses in here? You all would have been executed without a single question.

He had very thick glasses, because he had a heavy corrective prescription in those days, it took a big piece of glass. And he had this moment of inspiration.

They're pulling him with a noose, and he said, "No, no, I'm blind! I'm blind!" And he takes off his glasses and says, "Here, look for yourself!"

So these young guys take the glasses, they go like this – "Oh, oh, he's telling the truth. Take the noose off. You can live!"

At the end, in 1979, when the North Vietnamese army stormed in – actually it was Christmas, the best Christmas present a communist society has ever delivered to anybody – they swept in and drove the Khmer Rouge out of cities and towns and villages, and they called all the educated people who were left in the country to come to Phnom Penh – there were 62 people left who had any amount of high school, college education. That is 62 from around seven million people before the genocide, and about 1.7million to 2 million died in four years under the Khmer Rouge.

At that time, I happened to be in Thailand and I saw these 30,000 people stagger out. You know, they made it out, and they were lying in this open field, emaciated, exhausted.

Many of them not able to move. We had never seen anything like it. It was like Dante's inferno, the seventh level of hell. And we rushed back to Iowa, raised funds and sent doctors and nurses and food and medicine.

And for the next ten years, this battle between the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge goes on, but like the Americans in Vietnam, they couldn't get rid of them. And finally they gave up.

And there's this moment, this international moment, when the perm five comes together [UN Security Council Permanent Five members] – and the United Kingdom deserves great credit for its part in the perm five process – and we devised an election to be held [in the early 1990s].

Supervised by the UN. Kofi Annan, who was the Director of UN peacekeeping, this created the opportunity for our countries to come back and have embassies there.

And as we were having a pledging conference, I was sitting in a hotel in Tokyo with two USAID people and we had 13 million dollars. I took the place mat and said, "Here's what we're going to do", and drew the plan.

And it was, "Go and rent all the road-grading equipment you can find in Thailand; drive it into Cambodia and start grading roads."

And so we did this, and continued while I was Ambassador. It was because the road is where not only new agriculture, but human rights, education, all flow to people.

It was the one thing the Khmer Rouge couldn't abide. They couldn't withstand it. And as they dropped out, we tracked Pol Pot - we tried so hard to capture him.

Until on that night, March 6th, Saturday, 1999, my phone rings. It's the Prime Minister, and he said, "The last Khmer Rouge have stepped across the border from Thailand and surrendered." His name was Ta Mok, the same person who implemented that draconian program on that day in June in 1973 in southern Cambodia.

He was the last one and surrendered. We eradicated the single worst genocidal, mass-murdering terrorist organization of the second half of the 20th Century.

But you know - even though you eradicate that - people, the survivors, suffer beyond this. And you see it first-hand.

I had about 150 Cambodian employees. I had them all in a room and I said, "Everybody who was in a Khmer Rouge camp, put up your hand." And all the hands went up, but I expected that.

"Everybody who lost an immediate member of your family; your mother, your father, your spouse, your children, your brother, your sister, raise your hand."

Every hand goes up.

So that is why I have such incredible respect and appreciation to Dr James Smith, the Smith family, and all the members of the Aegis Trust family, for what they've done, keeping alive the memories and the testament of the survivors.

I had a special privilege yesterday, I was at Lincoln Castle in Lincolnshire. I saw the Magna Carta. Wow! You know - the source of this, right? The source of parliament, and the source of democracy in America. And I was so in awe of it.

And we were driving down, I'm told it's called the A1, the Great North Road - built on an old Roman road - and part of the Pax Romana. I was thinking: "1215 is also a significant year in Cambodian history".

It was the apex of ancient Khmer society. When King Jayavarman II ruled, when Angkor Wat was the largest city in the world and the centre of activity. And since then, now 800 years, Great Britain has evolved into this magnificent parliamentary democracy, and Cambodia evolved this incredible beautiful culture, of architecture, music and dance.

And suddenly, all of that culture was at risk. It came so close to being obliterated. And one of the key factors was that election, that democratic election, which devolved from the Magna Carta, was one of the key elements that eradicated the final remanents of the genocide and preserved the Cambodian culture. It is amazing how history can come together.

I'm a big believer in roads, looking forward to the future, I believe that roads are key, whether it's in Africa, South Asia ... for ending conflict and ending genocide, even the possibility of genocide.

Maybe what was the Pax Romana, built on Roman roads, and might become the "Pax Agricultura" - and it would be our great privilege to be part of this with all of you, in your great endeavours to do that together.

Thank you all for being here. Thank you for this incredible honour, and thank you for making my dream come true, I'm finally in London, in a magnificent place, as I dreamed when I first became a diplomat in 1967!