



THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs Charles Rivkin's Remarks at the 2015 Laureate Announcement Ceremony

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OPENING REMARKS

Secretary Vilsack, Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, ladies and gentlemen, your Excellencies, government officials, development professionals and honored guests, good afternoon.

I am Charles Rivkin, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, and I am honored, once again, to host this year's announcement ceremony of the World Food Prize Laureate.

Before I begin, I would like to pass along the best wishes of Secretary of State John Kerry. He sends his deepest regrets that he is out of the country and could not be here today. On his behalf, I would like to welcome everyone to a ceremony that has become a longstanding partnership between the State Department and the World Food Prize Foundation.

So ladies and gentlemen, in this 12th year that we have hosted the prize announcement at State together, please join me in recognizing Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, President of the

World Food Prize Foundation.

We deeply value all our partners in these goals. So let me also take a moment to thank all those who honor us with their presence and their support today. They include my colleague Nancy Stetson, Secretary Kerry's Special Representative for Global Food Security, Members of Congress, and all the members of the diplomatic corps, and the public and private sectors. I am also delighted to see my friend, Julie Borlaug, has flown in from Texas to be here today, carrying on the vital work of her grandfather, Norman Borlaug.

We all share so many of the same goals and principles. They include an unwavering commitment to reducing hunger and malnutrition, and to lifting men and women out of poverty. We also recognize how food security is inextricably related to critical issues like climate change, political stability, and human and economic development.

We know that when the global community can feed itself, it can lift economies, open up futures and address the critical issues of our time. Ultimately, food security helps us all thrive in a more secure and productive environment. That's why the U.S. government works to improve lives by focusing on the role that science, technology, and good policy play in reducing hunger and malnutrition.

I am especially proud to lead my Bureau's efforts to support and recognize the important contribution that agriculture plays in economic development. In that capacity, I was delighted to attend the Borlaug Dialogue in Des Moines last October.

While there, I had the opportunity to see a powerful representation of the global community – some of them are here today – who work every day to address the challenges of feeding the world. That commitment was exemplified by the 2014 laureate Dr. Sanjaya Rajaram who was recognized for his achievements in wheat breeding.

Iowa has always had a personal resonance for me. I spent many summers there as a boy, and my extended family has deep roots in Iowa agriculture. So it was truly meaningful for me to join a farmer in central Iowa, sit in the buddy seat of his John Deere S670 combine harvester, and watch him work.

As we moved through the cornfields, his combine gathered, husked and shelled 12 rows of corn at a time, turning them into bushels of instant grain. He checked his progress with onboard computers and GPS technology. These helped him deposit seed and fertilizer precisely, and even showed if he had missed a single ear of corn!

While he was doing this, he spoke to me about the importance of international markets for American agriculture, and how he had once hosted President Xi Jinping of China at his farm.

In just one ride on a combine, I saw a farmer using technology to enhance his livelihood and engage fully within the global economy. And I got a firsthand sense of the depth and scope of American agriculture and American agricultural technology.

In my work, I see our commitment to food security play out in so many ways.

The Obama Administration, for example, has undertaken a set of programs to reduce global hunger and under-nutrition. We've worked to increase private investment in African agriculture – focused on climate-smart agricultural methods.

Our Feed the Future initiative supports the efforts of 19 countries to improve their agricultural sectors. We have seen dramatic results: rising incomes, improved nutrition and a threefold increase in smallholder farmer sales since the previous year.

Food security even plays on the trade front. I'm sure you've heard about the passage of Trade Promotion Authority last week, which will move us closer to completion of two big trade deals – the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Those deals will not only lower impediments to trade in agricultural goods, they'll set new standards for greater opening of agricultural trade globally.

I'm pleased to note that food is a focus at the 2015 Milan Expo, which is attended by millions of visitors. This year's theme is "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life." And our USA Pavilion – which includes exhibits, programs, a website, and social media – is showing what we are doing to contribute to global food security, sustainability, and nutrition.

It will also showcase the innovation and cutting edge research that help us respond to challenges such as climate change, pressure on water and land resources, and population growth.

Our commitment to feeding the world, addressing world hunger, and ultimately improving lives continues. And I am reminded of a quote from Dr. Norman Borlaug, founder of the World Food Prize. He once said: "If you desire peace, cultivate justice. But at the same time, cultivate the fields to produce more bread. Otherwise there will be no peace."

It is now my pleasure to introduce Ambassador Kenneth Quinn.

During his diplomatic career, stretching more than 30 years, he has served in many capacities, including as a Rural Development advisor in the Mekong Delta; on the National Security Council staff at the White House; and for the State Department as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Ambassador throughout Indochina.

Throughout his years of service, he has shown consistent dedication to pursuing justice and alleviating human suffering.

Now in his 16th year as President of the World Food Prize Foundation, he has worked tirelessly to address hunger and poverty by recognizing significant achievements in agriculture and nutrition.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ambassador Quinn.

CLOSING REMARKS

Ladies and gentleman, on behalf of Secretary Kerry, Ambassador Quinn, and the World Food Prize Foundation, I would like to thank you for joining us today for the announcement of the 2015 World Food Prize Laureate.

Before we go, I'd like us to take a final moment, not only to recognize our distinguished speakers – but your own roles and contributions to food security worldwide. More and more, food security binds, concerns, and compels us all. So, thank you for all you do and all you will continue to do. And thank you very much for joining us here today.

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