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# President Obama, Governor Romney – ‘Call Me, Maybe’



By Kenneth M. Quinn

*While it may be unusual to evoke a Canadian voice, such as Carly Rae Jepsen, in the U.S. election, depending on the outcome this evening of the presidential vote, I hope to hear from either President Obama or Governor Romney about the below invitation:*

Americans will cast their votes today for president, and if reports are accurate, a few days later Vice President Xi Jinping of China will ascend to the chairmanship of the Chinese Communist Party, the first step in his assuming the presidency of China sometime in 2013.

The installation of these leaders provides a unique opportunity to help reshape the Sino-U.S. relationship in a positive direction. This could be a critical step given that there have been issues raised in both countries which would suggest that no matter who is sworn in on Jan. 20 in Washington, the relationship between China and the U.S. could face some potentially volatile political and economic confrontations — be they about the currency and trade issues Gov. Mitt Romney has pledged to redress, or the sovereignty over disputed islands in the South China Sea, which so roiled the recent visit to Beijing of President Barack Obama’s Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.



With the political transition process in both the United States and China only a few days away, there is a way the next president of the United States and the new president of China could set the relationship between our two countries on as positive a course as possible from the very beginning.

To that end, I would propose that President Obama, Governor Romney and Vice President Xi should immediately announce their willingness to accept this invitation to meet at the World Food Prize in Des Moines on Oct. 16, 2013 (U.N. World Food Day), with a goal of joining their two countries in a long-term effort to confront and reduce hunger in the world.



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Earlier this year, in February, Vice President Xi made an official visit to the United States, which included several days in Iowa at the invitation of Gov. Terry Branstad.

Xi was reprising a visit he made in 1985 as a young provincial agricultural official which brought him to the Hawkeye State and in particular to a warm embrace by the citizens of the small town of Muscatine, where he spent several days.

Returning in 2012, Xi went back to Muscatine and then touched the hearts of many Iowans at an official dinner in his honor in Des Moines, when he spoke eloquently about the beauty of the sunset over the Mississippi River and the compelling words of Mark Twain.

Of equal significance, the following day, Vice President Xi participated in the U.S.-China agricultural symposium held at the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, where I had the opportunity to serve as his host. There, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Chinese Agricultural Minister Han Changfu signed the most significant strategic agreement on agricultural trade ever entered into by the U.S. and China.

Of course, both Governor Romney and President Obama have significant histories in Iowa as well, having spent many days here (including stops in Muscatine) en route to the nomination by their parties for the presidency.


Iowa would thus seem to be a most appropriate place for a meeting between the leaders of two of the most significant countries on the planet.

It is even more so, since the state was the birthplace of the late Norman E. Borlaug, the Iowa farm boy who received the Nobel Peace Prize as the father of the Green Revolution. Borlaug, who founded the World Food Prize, was one of the very first individuals who entered China in the early 1970s and worked closely with former Premier Chou En Lai and Deng Xiaoping as they set China on its modern course for agricultural development.

The World Food Prize is truly an international setting. Each October, it holds a several-day conference known as the Borlaug Dialogue, which draws more than 1,000 participants from more than 70 countries around the globe. This past Oct. 18, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke at this conference as we honored an Israeli scientist who received the \$250,000 prize.

It is not too difficult to imagine two new presidents pledging a combined effort with joint U.S.-Chinese teams working in agricultural research and field application over the next decade.

At the dinner I hosted at the conclusion of Vice President Xi's visit to the World Food Prize in February, I

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for having led the successful bilateral effort to reduce hunger in the world.” At that point, one of the Chinese guests shouted out from the back of the room “No. Even sooner — make it 10 years!”

In that spirit, I extend this invitation to the next president of the United States and the next president of China to come to Des Moines on Oct. 16, 2013, and, at the World Food Prize on U.N. World Food Day, join in committing your two countries to alleviating hunger in the world.



**Kenneth M. Quinn**  
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