

OPENING SESSION

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn

October 18, 2017 - 1:00 p.m.

Introduction:

Morgan Day

Director of Planning, World Food Prize

Honored guests, friends, colleagues. I'm Morgan Day, and I'm the Director of Planning here at the World Food Prize. I'd like to say welcome to the 2017 World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium. If you'll please join me in welcoming our official party to the stage.

A year ago I took over this position from my mentor and colleague, Catherine Swoboda, whom I'm sure many of you know and remember well. I'm sure she'll be around this week, but I have enjoyed getting to know and meet with many of you over the past year, and I'm sure we'll get to know each other more over the course of the next three days.

Our theme for this year's symposium, *The Road out of Poverty*, is about the promise of agriculture to be an economic pathway to prosperity, not only for farmers but for whole regions impacted by food insecurity.

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, the president of the World Food Prize, knows the power of agriculture and of roads in uplifting people out of poverty. During his time as a Foreign Service Officer in the United States State Department, he witnessed the way that new roads built in the Mekong Delta, when partnered with improved seeds, led to improved livelihoods and drove out the Khmer Rouge in conflict-ridden regions. Over the course of his distinguished career, Ambassador Quinn has served as the United States Ambassador to Cambodia, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, as a member of the National Security Council, and is a member of Iowa Governor Robert Ray's staff. Since 2000, he has taken on the mantle of working with and instead of Dr. Norman Borlaug as the president of the World Food Prize.

You will please join me in welcoming him to the podium.

Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn

President - World Food Prize Foundation

Thank you, Morgan, for a very nice introduction. So I want to explain something as we begin, about our program. We have a terrific lineup of speakers for over the next . . . , today, tomorrow, Friday. And to the extent that you find it interesting, stimulating, engaging, it's all her doing. No, really, really. There's only one or two people who go home later than me every night, and Morgan is one of them. So to the extent you find things that, maybe there isn't something you think is so engaging or so interesting, that's probably because I made her put that in, and it's my fault. So, Morgan, thank you. You'll see her coming up from time to time.

So you see our slide. We have a focus on Africa, and we have a focus on *The Road out of Poverty* as a theme. The man who's putting the signposts on there is our 2017 laureate. So I want to tell you about the excitement that's building for this and to show you... I'm sure you've all bought *The Des Moines Register* today, right – you know, when you're in town. But here is the and that's in the paper today, and it's about one of the things the World Food Prize does – *Bringing the world to Iowa*, and over the past 18 years that I've been here, Bill Gates has been here, Kofi Annan, Princess Haya, Xi Jinping; and now adding to that illustrious group, our 2017 laureate, Akinwumi Adesina.

I want to introduce and ask you to join me in showing our appreciation for our chairman, John Ruan III. John, could you stand up so we could thank you? And now to formally introduce on the stage our 2017 laureate, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, the President of the African Development Bank. Akin, stand. So, Akin, we have a number of surprises for you, your highlight, and we have a special message from the president of Nigeria, His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari, and I loaded it myself this morning, so I hope... If there's any problem, you'll see why, but let us show you that message from President Buhari.

I received with delight the thrilling news of your award as 2017 World Food Prize Laureate. Certainly, this did not come to me and many Nigerians as a surprise, given your assistance and contributions to the development of agriculture across the African Continent. We are very proud of you.

According to the World Food Prize Foundation, you won the prize for driving change in African agriculture for over 25 years and improving food security for millions across the continent. Your choice as the winner of the World Food Prize, is a clear cognition and appreciation of your longstanding contributions reflected in your several roles and activities, which promote social and economic development.

Due to hard work, persistence, diligent efforts and _____ (of course your Grace)(God's full grace) you have risen among many limitations to emerge a notable figure and a true champion. Your life story mirrors that of zillions of African _____ and _____ for which the Nigerians are well known.

On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, I congratulate you and rejoice you, your family and the AfDB family on this well-deserved honor. Congratulations.

And President Buhari has sent a personal representative to be here for the ceremony for you, and Grace Adesina, your wife, is here. Grace, could you stand up so we could welcome you? You were out this morning with my wife, Le Son, for a tour around Iowa, so I hope you had a nice experience, and I'm sure you did a good job, dear – right?

So while this is a time of celebration, it's also a time when we remember those who are part of our family but no longer with us. During the year, Dr. B. R. Barwale from India, the 1998 Laureate, and Dr. Evangelina Villegas, the first woman Laureate, 2000, both passed away. We miss them, and they'll be forever in our memory. Also a few weeks ago Gus Schumacher passed away. Gus was supposed to be on the panel this afternoon on Russia and Eurasia and Agriculture. He had a heart attack. A wonderful human being and I just wanted to share with

all of you the sad news about Gus and somebody who was at the very first World Food Prize event I ever did in New York in 2000. So I felt a special kinship.

We have a wonderful Council of Advisors, many of whom are here and in the audience. And this year we are adding three new members to the Council – Tom Vilsack, former Secretary of Agriculture, has joined; Dr. Ismail Serageldin who is here in the audience, and also Rachel Ruan McLean. So our institution and the advice that I get is even stronger, and you know how important that is.

We've had a great week. We started with the Iowa Hunger Summit on Monday. We had an amazing array. We had over a thousand people. Secretary Bill Northey was there and saw this – over a thousand people sign up for the Iowa Hunger Summit, which is double the number that we've had before. Five Secretaries of Agriculture on a panel on this stage, three Republicans, two Democrats, all getting along and having a wonderful time. That's the power, the transformative power of agriculture.

You know, you're going to receive the World Food Prize. This morning they had the CAST Borlaug Communication Award Prize. Tonight we're going to have another prize, and on Monday we gave our Robert Ray Iowa Shares Humanitarian Award to Bishop Richard Pates of Des Moines and able to honor him. Tonight at the Hall of Laureates you're all invited. We will have a ceremony when Dr. Zhenling Cui, will receive the Borlaug Field Award endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation. Morgan will tell you when the buses leave and the symposium is over. Run downstairs, jump on the buses, and come over to the Hall of Laureates for a wonderful event tonight. The doors open at 5:30. The presentation begins at 6:00, and then you've got to be back here for 7:00 or 7:30 for the continuing side events that are going on.

We also have the Global Youth Institute. Tomorrow you'll be fighting for seats, because there will be 200 high school students in here, along with 150 to 200 teachers; another 40 or 50 alums of our youth program are going to be here. This is an amazing program. And we have two more awards at our ceremony tomorrow night when we give the World Food Prize to youth winners, we give two awards for youth winners (there may be more than two) at the State Capitol.

Now, we have also a number of our World Food Prize Laureates with us who are here. And I have to say, Dr. Adesina, you know, each Laureate has his or her own idiosyncrasies, particular things they want or they may ask for something. They're very humble people, but, you know, that it might be difficult to do. So each, you know, they have their personality, but nobody has caused me more trouble from the Laureates than you have. And the reason I say that is – you are so incredibly popular and so many people have signed up. We're like 1,040 registrations, somewhere around there, and every one, or it seems, has sent me an email telling me how it's absolutely imperative that they be at the Laureate Award Ceremony.

And I've called the Governor – "Is there any way we could expand the State Capitol? Could we build on an addition? I'll pay for the construction." No, John, I didn't say that, I promise. But the problem is, it'll only hold about 750 people, and what I do is – everyone who comes from outside the United States gets top priority, because if you come here from another continent, come here from another country, I think you should have priority about being invited to that ceremony. So that means not everybody... Yeah, thank you. You know, we're nice in Iowa. That's how we got a good relationship with President Xi Jinping. But we want to be very nice and welcoming to our guests when you're here and let you have that experience. And that means that not everybody is going to be able to get a ticket to come, and I apologize for that. But

we will have a viewing party here in the hotel, and it'll have food and drinks, and it's a good deal, and it'll be down, I think, in Rock River, I believe. I'm looking around for somebody to nod their head, but Rock River here in the hotel. And if somehow you got left out... And everyone says, "Oh, I'm a friend of Dr. Adesina. I've known him since third grade," or, "We went to Purdue together." So come and be our guests there. You'll be able to see the ceremony on the television screens there, and it'll be wonderful. And I ask and thank you for your understanding.

We have a wonderful media partner in Farming First who are here who help us and promote everything about the World Food Prize. There's a new magazine being launched, *AgroAfrica*. Richard Mbaram has come all the way from Lagos, invited a hundred or so of his closest friends from all over Africa to be here to launch the magazine. And the cover – it features our Laureate on it, and probably the magazine that reflects your vision of AgroAfrica if I were to sum up what President Adesina is focused on. So we're pleased to be the host for us.

This wouldn't be possible except for our sponsors, and I want to show you their names here, and then there's another page, and then there's another page, and then there's another page of generous contributions in support that make all this possible. So connect with us. I don't know how any of this stuff works. They have a 20-year-old or 25-year-old walk around, and they tweet as if they're me, and they're connecting on Facebook or whatever. And they say people pay attention. I just don't know. Anyway, we're open, we're launched.