

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

*Hon. Mark Green – Administrator, USAID*

October 16, 2019 - 1:15-1:27 p.m.

*Introduction*

**Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn**

President - World Food Prize Foundation

---

So, this is kind of the opening portion. I want to now invite John, Paul, if you would escort our laureate down to the front row, and we'll move on to what you're really here for, the opening keynote address for our conference.

So, I'm telling you about anniversaries, so this is an anniversary for me. You've heard of 10 years, 15 years, 25 years, 40 years, and this is for me my 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my career in foreign affairs. So, I arrived in Vietnam. You know, I dreamed of being a diplomat in Europe – chandeliered ballrooms. There's where I ended up – sitting on sandbags – yeah, but these are all the members of the military advisory team that I led in Duc Ton District. I can tell you everybody's name to this day because of the bond.

I learned there two things. One was, I saw the Green Revolution begin. I was in the villages when the Green Revolution started. I was to quote, sort of, John McCain, “a foot soldier in the Green Revolution.” And I was a USAID Officer. The State Department loaned me to USAID, and I learned the Borlaug formula of roads and rice and how they could transform people's lives, uplift them, and then could bring peace – they could root out the insurgency better than anything else we did.

30 years later when I was ambassador in Cambodia... And you'll see here I am. I still look the same. In the next slide, there I am on the left with my deputy, Carol Rodley, and we're out with de-miners and road builders, implementing \$13 million of USAID money. We built roads into the Khmer Rouge areas, and there were 25,000 of them when we started, and as I left, two months before I ended my ambassadorship, I got a phone call saying the last Khmer Rouge had surrendered, thanks to the USAID money – only with that were we able to eradicate the worst genocidal, mass-murdering terrorist organization of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It's for that reason and that involvement with USAID that I wanted to have the Administrator of USAID, Mark Green, be our opening keynote speaker. Now, he is a Wisconsin guy, went to Wisconsin - Eau Claire. I was telling him I used to live in La Crosse, Wisconsin. I went to school at Marquette in Milwaukee. He has been a four-term member of Congress. He was American Ambassador to Tanzania. He was the leader and President of the International Republican Institute, and now, I am so proud as a USAID officer to introduce the Administrator of USAID, the Honorable Mark Green.

**Hon. Mark Green**  
Administrator, USAID

---

Good afternoon, everyone. It is great to be here in Des Moines, and Ken, thank you for those kind words. As Ken mentioned, I grew up just up the road in Wisconsin. I know that people from America's two coasts like to think of all of this – Wisconsin, Iowa – as flyover country. But even they have to admit that every year around this time, the eyes of the world are upon us. So in the brief time that I have with you, I want to accomplish two things.

The first is the most enjoyable. I get to help pay tribute to Ambassador Ken Quinn and the leadership that he has brought to this movement. Ken has not only kept Dr. Borlaug's vision alive, but he's mobilized it, and he has helped it to touch countless countries and communities all around the world. He has built the World Food Prize from a one-day event with 30 or so attendees to a week-long attraction drawing more than a thousand participants from 50 countries. On his watch, the Foundation's educational programs have gone from a couple of dozen Iowans to more than 10,000 students a year from 26 states and 10 countries. But as the salesman's voice says on those very annoying travel commercials – "But wait – there's more!"

He touched upon it a little bit, but I don't know that people here truly appreciate all that he accomplished long before he ever came to the Foundation and to the World Food Prize. He served in a whole wide range of posts. He was actually President Ford's translator, Ambassador to Cambodia and chairman of the Interagency Task Force on POWs and MIAs. He's the only three-time recipient of the American Foreign Service Association Award for Intellectual Courage in Dissent and Challenging Policy. I am certain that his time with USAID was absolutely the highlight of his career.

Actually, it's probably what gave him the gray hair. But as I said, there's another reason I'm here, and it is a more serious one. Because the Borlaug Dialogue isn't merely a chance to celebrate progress, it's also an opportunity to draw the world's attention to challenges that will only be met with everyone's best efforts, everyone's most creative thinking. So, I'm also joining you today because I want to issue you a call to action, a call to arms. I want to challenge you, me, everyone I can, to take on the food and economic insecurity issues that are emerging from this area's unprecedented levels of displacement and forced migration.

I'm asked all the time as Administrator what it is that gets me up at night. This is it – displacement. Families are not where they were, and they're not where they're going to be. Nearly 70 million people are displaced in the world today, more than any time in recorded history, and I see it was a three-part challenge.

On the humanitarian side, we have to find better ways to deliver food and nutrition to these poor people in their time of urgent humanitarian crisis – when they're on the move or in fragile, uncertain settings. On the development side, we have to equip them and prepare them for the economic challenges and opportunities they face on the move and those they will face in their eventual homes. And finally, we must find ways to strengthen the communities whose economies are tested by the newcomers they host.

The largest part of this displacement, to be clear, is manmade – conflict and tyranny. There's South Sudan where civil war has destroyed so many lives and so many dreams. More than 3.7 million people have been displaced, 4.5 million people food insecure, and 1.3 million children

chronically malnourished. There's the tragedy of Yemen—3.6 million have fled their homes; 17 million are now food insecure, and 7.4 million acutely malnourished, and of course, the cycles of misery playing out before our eyes in Syria.

But remember, this is not merely an African or Middle Eastern crisis. It's also in our neighborhood. By year's end, 5 million Venezuelans will have fled to other countries, driven by Maduro's tyranny and an imploding economy. Of those left behind, more than 3.7 million are food insecure, nearly 2 million acutely malnourished. For those who have fled, their host communities must work to relieve acute humanitarian suffering but also integrate them to help them become productive.

So, I'm proud of the Administration's humanitarian leadership. In 2018 alone, USAID contributed more than \$3.7 billion in food assistance, helping 68 million people, half of them children. USAID remains the largest contributor to the World Food Program. And thanks to the innovations that so many of you here helped to pioneer, that food assistance is going further, more rapidly, more effectively than ever before. It is saving lives and giving children some hope for a healthier future.

Innovations like FEWS NET, the Famine Early Warning Systems' network, which provides detailed food insecurity reporting, guides response efforts, monitors signs of food insecurity, so we can intervene long before famine strikes. Innovations like the therapeutic, peanut-based paste for severely malnourished children developed by Edesia in Rhode Island. A packet the size of your cell phone contains all the nutrients a child needs. It doesn't need mixing with water, and it even tastes good.

Innovations like the biometric iris scanning being used in refugee settlements in places like Uganda. A refugee household simply presents its ration card, linked via bar code to an electronic database. And then, together with an adult iris or fingerprint scan, they're able to get food. When there's a match, they collect their monthly distribution. And it makes sure that we're able to get the right amount of food going to the right families at the right time.

Of course, these innovations are important, but we're gathered here because we know that they're only a down payment on what is needed. Humanitarian assistance, including food assistance, is treatment, not cure. We must develop new technologies and partnerships that will not only assist displaced families in crisis settings but offer them livelihood opportunities wherever they can find them. We must ensure their plight doesn't sentence them to a life of dependency and stunted potential.

I bring USAID's call to action here because there's no better place, nor more hopeful place, than here with the Borlaug Dialogue and the World Food Prize Foundation. The choice of Dr. Simon Groot, as this year's laureate, is proof. It's proof of the power unleashed when ideas and enterprise come together. It reminds us that development progress doesn't come from Washington or Rome or Davos, especially not from Davos.

Lives are lifted from the community level when farmers and families are enabled and empowered where they live. Dr. Groot's East-West Seed Company put more resilient, productive, and affordable seeds in the hands of local farmers in Southeast Asia. As a result, food security is rising, nutritional outcomes are rising, and economic opportunity is rising. By applying that same spirit to the challenge of families displaced, I know we can find new answers.

USAID will do its part, and today I have several announcements to make which hopefully make that clear.

First, USAID will soon launch a major, new collaboration opportunity for businesses, NGOs, universities, and others to co-create our next generation of agricultural biotech investments. This new opportunity includes support to critical innovations, such as improved seed to help farmers better handle the next drought or resist the next pest invasion. But it also includes support to partner countries to develop policies that enable the science-based solutions to be researched, tested and purchased where they are most needed. We have such faith in what this offering can bring, what the collaboration can bring, that we're expecting to provide more than \$70 million in support towards the best submitted ideas.

Second, we are launching a new Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Crop Improvement, which will be led by Cornell University. The lab will help develop new seed varieties and ensure that smallholder farmers have access to these innovations as quickly as possible.

Third, I'd like to announce our new, exciting partnership with MasterCard. It will help farmers access the financial resources they need to invest in their own businesses. MasterCard brings digital solutions and expertise in financial services to the table. USAID will bring a network of farmers and agribusinesses across sub-Saharan Africa ready to pilot the new finance technologies. Together we'll help connect rural communities to formal finance and markets, and for many of them, this will be for the first time.

Fourth, I'm pleased to announce our latest collaboration with John Deere. Our initiative aims to bring to even more places a successful model of empowering smallholder farmers, especially women. It will facilitate access to the tools, machinery and finances they need to thrive. And it's true collaboration. USAID will bring our ability to test financing and distribution models, along with our in-country networks. John Deere will leverage its unique equipment and global networks of dealers, lenders and after-sales support providers – public outcomes, private enterprise driven.

If there's anything that I hope you take from my remarks today, it's that USAID is committed to helping lead and helping to lead in this rapidly changing, rapidly challenging world.

My final announcement today is that USAID is reshaping and redefining itself to take these challenges on. We will very soon stand up a new bureau for resilience in food security. It will both redouble our efforts under Feed the Future to provide tools that people need to feed themselves and to climb from poverty, and it will make those tools more effective in communities facing crisis, by adding resilience innovations. The bureau will bridge the gap between food assistance with humanitarian aid and food security, helping families and communities take ownership of their lives and livelihood. Every human being, every community instinctively wants a hand *up*, not a hand *out*, and USAID wants to help them get there.

Final thought. During my first trip as administrator, I was visiting the Somali Region of Ethiopia, and one of our events on that trip was to observe a food distribution in one of the hardest-hit areas. I remember walking a field, watching when sacks of grain were being passed out to families. I came across a wonderful Ethiopian lady who had just received her allotment. And she stopped me. She said, "I have a question." "Go ahead. Shoot." She said, "First off, I really appreciate this grain. We need this food. My question is – Can you help me with

irrigation, so I never have to ask for food again?" That spirit, we all know, is not unique to that lady or to that country. It is in the hearts and minds of millions of people all across this world. We owe it to them for our best efforts, our best ideas, and we need to put them in their hands and turn them loose.

On behalf of USAID, I want to thank Ken Quinn for all that he has done to make the World Food Prize "a thing," as my son would say – an event, something not to be missed. And to all of you, thank you for what you have done. More importantly, thanks for what you're going to do in the months and years ahead to help families and communities, especially those affected by crisis, help them grab that brighter future. Thank you.