

**2014 BORLAUG DIALOGUE**

October 17, 2014 - 9:00 a.m.

Speaker: *Ambassador Charles Rivkin*

*Introduction:*

**Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn**

President - World Food Prize Foundation

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We're now ready to begin our final morning session, and our first panel is Trendlines for Political Stability, Global Trade and Potential Disruptions. We have a great assembly of speakers. Our first speaker, Ambassador Charles Rivkin, has to leave right after this, for Washington, so he's going to speak and then cut out. And then Dr. Hamre and Ambassador Speckhard will come up and join me on the stage, and we'll continue the discussion.

I'm so pleased and feel privileged to introduce to you Charles H. Rivkin, the current Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, the first political appointee to hold that job. And he, before that, had the job I always dreamed of when I was a kid going from Dubuque driving to Washington to start my foreign service career. I thought, oh, maybe I could be ambassador to France, and he got it and was there for more than four years and served with incredible distinction, personally awarded the Legion of Honor, the rank of Commander, by the French President François Hollande, and has had a wonderful and marvelous career in business.

He was 20 years served as president and CEO of companies such as the Jim Henson Company and Wildbrain and spent his early childhood in Luxembourg, Senegal, The Gambia, where his dad, William Rivkin, who was from Muscatine, Iowa, we're pleased to say, was ambassador under President Kennedy and President Johnson. And if you read – and if you haven't, I encourage you to do so – he had an op-ed in *The Des Moines Register* and talked about those summers he would spend on the farm. So a man with roots in the Middle West, a connection to Iowa and an incredibly distinguished diplomatic career. Ambassador Charles Rivkin.

## TRENDLINES FOR POLITICAL STABILITY, GLOBAL TRADE AND POTENTIAL DISRUPTIONS

### **Ambassador Charles Rivkin**

Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State

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Well, thank you, Ambassador Quinn. And on behalf of the Secretary of State, John Kerry, I also want to thank you for your service to our country. Ambassador Quinn has been fighting for causes greater than himself for his entire career, and it's pretty clear that, as a result, he's helped the world. So thank you.

It's a great honor for me to have a chance to speak to this distinguished group. I apologize that I have to leave right afterwards, but I'm thrilled that I'm here, and especially because, as the ambassador said, I have some ties to the Midwest and here to Iowa. My grandfather immigrated from Russia to the United States, and he settled in Muscatine, as the ambassador mentioned, and my father was born there. And my uncle owned Bookey Meat Packing here in Des Moines, and he also owned an amusement park that many of you from Des Moines may know – it was called Riverview. And as a kid, I remember as a kid visiting your aunt and uncle in Des Moines, and when your uncle owns an amusement park, it's about as good as it gets. And I was sitting on top of this Ferris wheel, and it felt as though I could see all of Iowa spread out before me, and I remember it being absolutely magical.

And as the ambassador mentioned, I did spend some time on a farm my dad owned in Indiana. And to the farmer's dismay, what my brother and I loved doing would be to sneak into the barn and dive into this sea of perfectly round soybeans, which is not recommended for any kids listening out there, but it was incredibly fun. And yet I really had no idea at the time what soybeans were, not to mention the fact that they'd become a staple of the world or that I'd be the Assistant Secretary of State and working with global partners to address one of the great questions of our time, which is – How do you sustainably feed nine billion people by the year 2050.

Now, as the famous American economist and Nobel Prize winner, Paul Samuelson, once said – Good questions outrank easy answers. And when it comes to feeding the world sustainably, that's a question that yields many challenges. Making sure we have well-functioning agricultural systems is a food security issue. It's an economic security issue, and it's an energy security issue. And, as we learned during the food riots of 2008, it's also a national security issue. And as we learned during the famine in Somalia in 2011, which claimed more than 250,000 lives, it's also a moral issue. And as Dr. Norman Borlaug famously said – You can't build a peaceful world on empty stomachs and human misery. And when it comes to addressing these and other related challenges, fewer are closer to the heart of this debate and the action in this huge arena than the United States of America.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of our economy, and it's a sector in which we consistently enjoy a trade surplus. We're the world's largest and most innovative producer of biotech crops, and at the consumer's end, it's the largest market for organic products. We continue to lever the technological and ecological knowhow of our American scientists and farmers to make

significant advances in precision farming, in breeding, in biotechnology to raise productivity, improve food security and nutrition, to build resilience and advance development.

And on the global stage we're committed to open markets that yield affordable and stable supplies of wheat and other staples to the world and committed to making sure that the poorest countries have better access to international markets. We are also working closely with global partners across many sectors to support smallholder farmers through initiatives such as Feed the Future, which works with developing countries to invest in their own agricultural systems. Or the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which the President created in 2012 with African leaders in the private sector to support investment in African agriculture.

And at this very event in 2012 Pierre Ferrari, the president and CEO of Heifer International, said that smallholder farmers are, and I quote, "the best change agents we have to help feed this hungry world," and we're also committed to ensuring that women farmers, who comprise 50% of the world's smallholders, have the same access to land, to agriculture, agricultural inputs and markets, as do men. As we work towards these and other goals, we're mindful of agriculture's environmental footprint. All told, it claims 70% of our water and causes one quarter of our greenhouse gases.

So we must also work with our global partners to create and promote low-emission, climate-resistant development solutions. The Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture, which the United States launched at the recent U.N. Secretary General's Climate Summit in New York, will work to reduce greenhouse gases, and it will also provide economic opportunity for farmers, particularly women – and that's another key step in the right direction.

Dr. Borlaug once described himself as "one small part of a big team of organizations, officials, scientists, and farmers" who were fighting what he called, "a losing war on the food production front." Today that team is many times bigger, and everyone has a part to play, from the farmer in the mountains of Nepal applying crop intensification techniques to feed her family, to the researcher in the innovation lab working to find better nutrition on livestock, and from all the political leaders and business leaders, women and men, to the members of the NGO community and our multilateral agencies.

While it may have seemed like we faced a losing war when Dr. Borlaug said those words, today – and I think you'll agree – it's a war we're winning. One hundred years after his birth, we're well positioned to honor his legacy by bringing that global team together to fight hunger, poverty and undernutrition and safeguard our food security. Given the commitment, not only of the United States but so many players from all sectors around the world, I have to say, I like our chances.

Thank you very much.