

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

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Remarks by

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President of the World Food Prize Foundation

as prepared for delivery

at

The World Food Prize

2015 Laureate Announcement Ceremony

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Ambassador Rivkin, thank you so very much for your very kind introduction and, on behalf of our Chairman John Ruan and the Ruan family, I want to convey our gratitude to you for hosting our Laureate Announcement Ceremony, and for your address last October at our World Food Prize symposium in Des Moines. On a personal note, you have my unending admiration for you and your family's role in establishing the Rivkin Award through the American Foreign Service Association to honor your father and inspire intellectual courage among American diplomats.

I want to thank Eric Luftman and the members of your staff who have done such an exceptional job in working with Catherine Swoboda and my team in preparing for this event.

Secretary Vilsack, it is a great honor to have you with us. You are quite a draw as this is the largest number of people to ever attend one of our announcement ceremonies. Mrs. Christie Vilsack, we are especially pleased you could be here given the leadership you are providing at U.S.A.I.D. on international educational issues, including educational opportunities for girls and young women.

I want to acknowledge the ambassadors and the members of the diplomatic corps who are here today. Your Excellencies, you honor us with your presence. Having you here is very meaningful in that our Prize is a truly international award that has been given to laureates from around the globe.

We are very pleased that one of those laureates is here with us, David Beckmann, who received our prize in 2010. In addition, I want to recognize Peter McPherson, the President of the APLU and a distinguished member of our World Food Prize Council of Advisors.

Mrs. Barbara Grassley, wife of Iowa Senator Charles Grassley, thank you for being here today. Former Iowa Congressman Jim Leach, we are appreciative of your presence. My good friend Nancy Stetson, who is Secretary of State Kerry's Global Food Security Advisor, is with us. Nancy, please convey to the Secretary our wishes for his full recovery from his accident.

Secretary Kerry has been present for our Laureate Announcement the past two years, during which he always noted the enormous respect he has for the legacy of the founder of the World Food Prize, the late Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Dr. Norman E. Borlaug.

I am so pleased that Julie Borlaug, his granddaughter, was able to join us.

Dr. Borlaug created the World Food Prize in 1986 to be the equivalent of a Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture, to recognize and inspire those breakthrough achievements and innovations that will allow us to produce sufficient, nutritious food to feed the rapidly growing population that he saw coming in the 21st century.

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In the past 29 years, 40 individuals from 14 different countries and the United Nations have been named laureates and received our \$250,000 prize. They are an array of scientists, policy advocates, political leaders and innovators in a wide range of specializations from plant and soil science to irrigation to food processing and storage to biotechnology.

The common thread which unites all of our laureates is that they had done something unique or unprecedented that has impacted the lives of thousands or millions of people, reducing hunger by increasing the quality, quantity and availability of food in the world.

Today we will name the 41st World Food Prize Laureate.

The Chairman of our Laureate Selection Committee Dr. M.S. Swaminathan of India, described our 2015 Laureate as "...a strategic thinker and a man with a future vision; as a person who has been an innovator and pioneer in the development sector for over 40 years; a man whose mission began as a temporary relief effort following a devastating typhoon and then his country's war for independence, but which quickly evolved into a long term and multidimensional endeavor that now employs over 100,000 people to implement a broad spectrum of programs in a wide array of areas including: microfinance, health, education, human rights and agriculture – programs that have expanded from his home country to ten other countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean."

In agriculture, under our laureate's leadership, the organization he created impacts more than a million farmers each year through making credit available to small holders, innovative poultry and dairy programs and disseminating advanced hybrid seed technology.

The new crop varieties his agricultural research center produces enable farmers to deal with the new challenges they face from increased climate volatility, such as salt water intrusion, flooding and drought. Our laureate's goal is to change poor subsistence farmers, the majority of them women, into commercially viable business operators, generating greater income through increased harvests and lifting themselves and their families out of poverty.

The bottom line is that in the more than four decades under his leadership, his organization has enhanced food security and provided the opportunity for a pathway out of poverty for up to as many as 150 million people. At the heart of this endeavor has been the central principle that our laureate identified as the key to uplifting the ultra-poor: that women need to be the agents of change and that education is a key to their taking charge of their lives. To this end, his foundation operates over 38,000 schools in which over one million children are enrolled.

At a time when the world confronts the imminent challenge of feeding over 9 billion people, the organization our laureate founded and leads has created the preeminent model being followed

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around the globe on how to educate girls, empower women and lift whole generations out of poverty.

That organization is BRAC, the largest non-profit organization in the world, headquartered in our laureate's home country of Bangladesh and operating in 10 other countries. And, that individual who founded and has led BRAC for 43 years to such extraordinary achievements and as such truly deserves recognition as the 2015 World Food Prize Laureate is Sir Fazle Hasan Abed.

We are thrilled that Sir Fazle's daughter Tamara Abed could be here today as her father joins that pantheon of distinguished World Food Prize Laureates who have led the single-greatest period of food production and hunger reduction in human history.

We are very honored to have Minister Shahabuddin Patwary of the embassy of Bangladesh present at this ceremony. Your Excellency, I also want to acknowledge the very significant progress your country has made toward attaining the Millennium Development Goals, and which has been recognized by the United Nations.

I want to extend the warmest possible invitation to everyone here to join us in Des Moines October 14-16 as we present the \$250,000 World Food Prize to Sir Fazle and hold our Borlaug Dialogue symposium and Global Youth Institute. Since this year marks the 101st anniversary of Dr. Borlaug's birth, we have chosen for the theme of our three day conference the title Borlaug 101: A course in the Fundamentals of Global Food Security. As you will see in the brochure you receive as you leave the ceremony, we have assembled an exceptional "faculty" led by His Excellency Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda. We are so pleased that we will have a sharp focus on issues of girls' education and encouraging young women to pursue careers in STEM with Chelsea Clinton and Sheryl WuDunn giving keynote speeches and a panel moderated by 2003 World Food Prize laureate Catherine Bertini. You can register to attend our symposium by going to our website www.worldfoodprize.org.

I now have the singular honor and great personal privilege to introduce our featured speaker at this ceremony, the United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

I first met then Iowa Governor Vilsack fifteen years ago when I called on him at the Iowa State Capitol shortly after assuming leadership of the World Food Prize. We discussed that day how we could work together to carry forward the vision of Dr. Borlaug, an individual who was a great personal inspiration to both of us.

Since then, I have witnessed Governor and then Secretary Vilsack provide inspirational leadership on an array of issues that were of great importance to Dr. Borlaug, including his:

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- emphasizing the importance of good nutrition and healthy eating through the inspiring call to action he delivered at our 2005 World Food Prize symposium;
- joining with two former Iowa Republican Governors to establish our Iowa Hunger Summit to combat hunger at home.
- championing at USDA the school feeding programs started by two World Food Prize Laureates, former Senator Bob Dole and the late Senator George McGovern;
- signing the most significant U.S.-China strategic agricultural cooperation agreement in our World Food Prize Hall of Laureates;

And I know Dr. Borlaug was especially grateful to Secretary Vilsack for his role in inspiring the next generation of young leaders through the USDA Borlaug Fellows Program as well as the World Food Prize Borlaug Ruan Internships and our joint endeavor known as the Wallace Carver Fellows Program.

But my most poignant memory of Secretary Vilsack came as he delivered stirring remarks at the unveiling of the statue of Dr. Borlaug in the U.S. Capitol on March 25, 2014, the 100th anniversary of his birth.

At that ceremony, it became clear to me that through his leadership, first as Governor of Iowa and then as one of the longest-serving secretaries of agriculture in U.S. history, no one has done more than Tom Vilsack to carry forward Norman Borlaug's vision and fulfill his dreams.

Ladies and gentleman, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.