

**2012 THE "BORLAUG DIALOGUE"**

October 19, 2012 - 8:20 a.m.

*Ertharin Cousin*

*Introduction by:*

**Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn**

President - World Food Prize Foundation

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So now, I guess, Ambassador Cousin, it's always a tough act to follow when your boss has already been on the stage. But I want to tell you a little bit about our speaker this morning, Ambassador Ertharin Cousin. She is the executive director of the World Food Programme.

And some of you who have been coming long enough know that in 2003 we honored Catherine Bertini as our World Food Prize laureate for her role in making the World Food Programme into the single greatest and most significant program to deliver food to hungry people all around the world in all history.

And so we feel a special connection to the World Food Programme. But now Ambassador Cousin, who has been serving for the last four years as the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. food agencies in Rome, was appointed by the Secretary-General and has taken over this job. And in just the short time that she has been carrying it out, I'm hearing people come back and tell me about the strong leadership, innovative work and great new ideas that she's already bringing to the agency. So Rome becomes more and more a place where food issues are receiving great priority. And so she is part of that effort to bring global food security on the national agenda not only of the United Nations but of countries around the globe.

She's a neighbor from Chicago, was involved with Feeding America, known as America's Second Harvest, so she has been involved in providing leadership in this issue for years and years.

It's my great pleasure to introduce to you the executive director of the World Food Programme, Ambassador Ertharin Cousin.

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## ***BREAKFAST KEYNOTE:***

### **Ertharin Cousin**

Executive Director, United Nations World Food Programme

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Thank you very much. As my friend, Ambassador Quinn just said during those generous comments, and I thank you for those comments, it's always hard to follow your boss first thing in the morning, but I'll do my best. Let me first of all say good morning to all of you and thank you. And, wow, there are a lot of you in this room, my goodness. And thank you all very much for being here early in the morning. And I want to especially thank my good friend, Catherine Bertini, Professor Hillel, Mr. Ruan and all of you for being here this morning.

This is such a significant opportunity that, as I said to Ambassador Quinn when he asked me... Of course, you're invited to attend the World Food Prize. Those of you who don't live in Rome don't know that the World Food Prize occurs every year at the exact same time as the CFS. And so the Committee on Food Security meets. That is where we bring all the global community together to talk about - How do we move forward to build the global platform to support food security and the development of food security programs that will assist us in the meeting the needs of the hungry poor around the world. Catherine Bertini actually sits on the high level panel of experts. I know there are a couple of other people in the room who also attend it.

So my immediate response to him was to regret - I'm sorry, I cannot attend. And he then calls me, emergency call, emergency call - track her down, find her - I'm on the road as usual - and says, "The Secretary-General wants to know who from the United Nations is attending. You don't really want me to tell him you're not coming - right?" So I told my staff, I said, "Okay, so now we've got to go to Des Moines, Iowa." They go, "How are you going to do that?" I said, doppleganger me there. So yesterday those of you who saw me, if I looked a little odd, it was because I started at 6:30 a.m. in the morning in Rome, Italy, flew to Frankfurt to get a direct flight to Chicago to fly here to Des Moines, Iowa, to participate.

And I'm so proud that I did, Professor Hillel, and had the honor to celebrate with you last night. You are an inspiration to us all. This global institution, this World Food Prize, has begun to shine a glow of determination across the entire community related to - How do we address the issues of hunger and chronic malnutrition? Because you're not only recognizing the achievements of the past and present but you're cultivating the future generations of leaders who will help us solve these challenges.

So, Professor Quinn, we thank you for your commitment to sustaining and renewing Dr. Borlaug's vital legacy with every passing year and with each new entrant into the World Food Prize Hall of Fame. It is an honor for me to join you in Iowa to celebrate achievements.

I am from Chicago, so we do have a bit of a rivalry with Iowa - we win, we're bigger. But it is an honor for me to celebrate the achievements of this year's World Food Prize laureate, Dr. Daniel Hillel; because he's engaged with these important days of reflection that his leadership has helped bring us all together to participate in this reflection on partnerships in our fight against hunger and poverty.

It's because of Dr. Hillel's brainstorm as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at last night's Prize ceremony, drip irrigation is making the desert bloom. But let me tell you, I've personally seen the impact of your work, Dr. Hillel, on smallholder farmers in Tanzania and on the sides of mountains with indigenous farmers in Guatemala. So it is not just in the desert that you are having the impact - it is around the world where you are making a difference.

And the challenges facing this world in wisely managing its resources and producing enough food to feed more than nine billion people by 2050 will require a persistent flow of brainstorms like Dr. Hillel's brainstorm.

So as we consider the many possible priorities and decide where best to unleash our next efforts, as we discipline our minds and partner with colleagues to produce a constant drip, a drip of creative innovation, let's not forget the lessons that Dr. Hillel's examples teach us that our greatest brainstorms, our greatest brainstorms, can start when we take the time to listen to hear the requirements of our environment, to speak to the air, water and soil all around us, and through careful testing, research and attentively recording the answers that we hear.

In his Nobel Prize lecture, as you know, Ambassador Quinn, Dr. Borlaug wisely observed that, even in a world of abundance there remains the unsolved socioeconomic problems of finding effective ways to distribute the needed additional food to the vast numbers of underprivileged masses who have little or no purchasing power.

At the U.N. World Food Programme our work traditionally involves collecting food from one place and moving it elsewhere. For 50 years we've been bringing large amounts of food to large numbers of hungry, poor people, too often requiring urgent assistance in desperate circumstances. And of course we have our familiar tools for getting the job done - ships, trucks, airplanes, with the capability to move food across vast distances - or donkeys, camels or other beasts of burdens to carry smaller loads up mountains, terrains or through desert storms.

We have logistics wizards at WFP who manage these shipments with speed and efficiency and a network of committed, cooperating partners who complete the supply chain by distributing food to hungry people in some of the most remote places and often sometimes the most dangerous places on earth. Just this morning I learned that one of our staff members in Somalia was shot while coming out of a mosque in Mogadishu - but this is the risk that our people take to ensure that hungry people have access to food.

So when I was appointed by Secretary-General Ban, my friend and WFP former Executive Director Catherine Bertini called me up to congratulate me, to wish me well and tell me one more time that WFP was the best U.N. organization, that I had the best job in the world; and she challenged me to make the organization even better.

Why? Because in 2008 the executive board agreed that WFP, while good, needed to move from food aid to food assistance, that we needed to move from not only feeding the hungry poor - yes, providing food aid remains a vital tool in our food assistance toolbox - but that we needed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our food assistance tools, that we needed to get better about including our desire to purchase and making a reality out of our desire to purchase food locally and regionally to support local markets, that WFP needed to expand opportunities for the hungry poor to access food in those markets when there is food in the market, giving the

mothers the dignity of buying food for the children, as opposed to having food handed to them, that WFP needed to get better and we needed to make food assistance more than a handout but a hand up, looking towards the day when we end the daily uncertainty of where the next meal will come from, that far too often sends hundreds of millions of children to bed hungry every night.

No organization, no matter how good, no organization, can meet this challenge alone. Any success we have achieved in the past or that we will achieve in the future is directly related to our support from many of you in this room, the commitment of our implementing partners who work at our side in the field, strong collaborative effort from other U.N. and NGO organizations, and most important, most importantly, our success, our collective success is achieved because of the determination and the will to move ahead of the people we serve, even in the most dire circumstances.

I think you will all agree that that's what gives us our strength, that's what keeps us motivated, not only to perform this work but to resolve to succeed in our efforts.

So one of my primary objectives in this new role is to knit up the partnerships for the benefit of those we serve. On Tuesday, in fact, we celebrated World Food Day in Rome. This year's World Food Day, the theme was "Agricultural Cooperatives, the Key to Feeding the World." This was deliberately aligned with the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives. Agricultural cooperatives, as you know, are key because they provide an alternative model for economic development and food and nutrition security, one that balances two goals – profit and sustainability as with any other enterprise but also helping their members to peacefully and democratically achieve social, cultural, and economic aspirations.

At WFP we're supporting agricultural cooperatives through our Purchase for Progress initiative, or "P4P," as we call it. This work began through the collaborative initiative between WFP and the Gates Foundation. The pilot program is now supported in over 20 countries by not only Gates but the Howard Buffett Foundation and a number of other government donors. With P4P we're tackling the root causes of hunger and insecurity by helping rural farmers, particularly women, produce more high-quality food to better serve the nutritional needs of their families and vulnerable people in surrounding communities. P4P pilots in 20 countries are leading more than one million farmers' organization members in over 800 cooperatives in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In fact, in Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda, at least half the cooperative members are women, and more than one third of the cooperative leadership positions are held by women. But because it's not only about the money, it's also about access. It's about getting farmers the inputs and know-how, they need to improve the quality of their harvest through things like soil testing, seeds, fertilizers, helping them reduce post-harvest losses, showing them that better-quality products will secure higher market prices.

But the reality is, P4P doesn't achieve these objectives alone. We can't. That's not WFP's mandate. We provide the catalyst for bringing together all the right people – from governments to NGOs to U.N. organizations to private sector businesses, banks, farmers, input suppliers, all the people who make this change happen. We're engaging with regional bodies to scale up successful models along with member governments and working to promote the best government

policy environments to encourage the continued growth of P4P or P4P-like programs and opportunities.

And P4P is achieving results. Since the program began in 2008, we've contracted for over 267,000 metric tons of food and paid out over \$65 million to P4P vendors. WFP aims to purchase between 10 to 20% of the food we buy in developing countries in a pro-smallholder way. Our goal is to deliver more examples like the one this year where we purchased over 6,000 metric tons of food in Nigeria to support our operations in Niger. And if we succeed and achieve our 10 to 20% goal, we will put more than a hundred million dollars directly into the pockets of smallholder farmers every year.

Food grown by smallholder farmers will then assist the hungry poor in their own countries through food assistance programs, including school meals, maternal child health programs and Food for Assets. But we can't stop there, because if WFP is the only market for smallholder farmers, for the harvest of smallholder farmers, then we've failed; because the real opportunity is creating commercial markets, institutional markets that are sustainable, that are durable, that will ensure long-term economic opportunity. It is not about the program. The program is simply the catalyst. It is about the opportunity that we have to change the lives of smallholder farmers forever.

And creating that more durable and sustainable agricultural value chain will provide the economic opportunities for families to feed their children for the long term. Liberia is one of those pilot P4P countries. Last night I shared at the dinner table with our good friend, Liberian Minister of Agriculture Dr. Florence Chenoweth, who's here somewhere – good morning, Florence – who is the winner of the Hunger Project's 2011 Food Prize and who has worked with us and P4P activities in Liberia.

And looking at P4P measures of women's participation in farmers organizations, Liberia tops the list with 63% of members are women, and 48% of the women are in leadership roles. A country that ten years ago emerged from years of brutal conflict is now setting the pace for Africa and the world, maximizing the energies of both its women and its men in its drive to achieve middle-income country status by 2030 as set out by President Sirleaf.

And just last month President Sirleaf joined with us, because of her leadership role with women in Africa, to launch the first of its kind coordinated program between U.N. women, FAO, WFP and IFAD to increase agricultural opportunities for women. We launched that program at UNGA, but more importantly we're launching it on the ground next week in seven countries across the globe, including Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. We will maximize our collaborative advantage of FAO with seeds and tools, WFP with our ability to purchase from smallholders, IFAD with their support for credit, and access to market information that will then provide new opportunities for women in each of these countries to move forward in the area of agricultural development – because we know that women's empowerment is essential, because women represent 43% of the agriculture labor force in developing countries.

Again, in collaboration with our many partners, WFP, through our Food for Work and Cash for Work programs, provide women with access to resources that give them pride and empowerment.

A month ago I was in Nicaragua where I met with a women's cooperative and where in such a remote area they had to helicopter us into the area. And in 2010 and 2011 WFP have provided financial support as well as technical support to this women's cooperative to help them for the very first time open bank accounts and to grow vegetable gardens that gave them more opportunities than to just feed their families but to sell and have money left over to put into the bank. In 2012 we gave them no money, but we continued to give them technical assistance that these women now had their bank accounts, they prioritized, they bought the seeds, they pooled their assets, and they grew their own vegetable gardens without support from an outside organization. We had changed their lives.

And so I asked them – what did it mean to them to have this level of empowerment? And all the women started to laugh. And it was really interesting, because the women were sitting in front of me. Any of you who have traveled in any of these countries have seen this scene where you're sitting with the women's group and all the men are lined up on the outside around the women's group as their women are talking to us. So instead of asking the women, I reached over and I asked one of the men, "What does it mean to you that your wife is involved in this program?" And he said very sheepishly, "It means I now have to listen to her because she has money."

So it has changed the complete dynamic in that household. And WFP is no longer providing financial assistance – they're doing it themselves. So everyone laughed but recognized the truth and the power of this one man's statement.

In our food assistance toolbox we're also collaborating closely with partners for substantial progress, helping vulnerable communities build their resilience to shocks. At WFP we're committed to ensuring our next emergency response doesn't end with meeting the emergency food and food access needs of those we serve, that even in the most desperate of situations, we allow adequate resources, time and space to ensure our actions help countries and communities to bounce back stronger with greater capacity to cope for themselves the next time bad things happen. We've learned that building resilience must be collaborative and anticipatory.

We need to find the right partners and plan ahead for changing and uncertain risk environments. For example, WFP and OXFAM America's R4 Rural Resilience Initiative, funded by USAID and Swiss Re, and the Rockefeller Foundation, allows 13,000 food-insecure rural households in Ethiopia to access weather indexed insurance by participating in a public safety net program. R4 has been expanded to Senegal and will continue to expand over the next five years.

In the Horn and the Sahel we're building better by using Food for Assets programs to help communities vulnerable to drought build more dams and catchments to conserve scarce water supply. In an effort to provide safe access to nutritious food for the hungry poor, WFP participates in the Global Alliance for Clean Cook Stoves, promoting our use of fuel-efficient stoves by the most vulnerable people in the humanitarian transition and development settings.

We're also promoting fuel-efficient stoves in WFP assisted school feeding programs to create a healthier educational environment and to reduce student time spent gathering firewood instead of attending classes. With our school feeding program, we are also now exploring the opportunity of launching a new program with UNICEF, UNESCO and relevant NGO partners as well as targeted local governments where we not only provide the food but we knit up with partners to ensure that books are provided, that teachers are provided and other educational inputs.

So what we're truly doing is not increasing the number of children who are attending school that too often look like feeding centers but not schools, but providing real hope and opportunity for the future because we're nourishing their bodies and nourishing their minds for real hope and a real future.

These resilience strategies look beyond short-term food needs to lay a solid foundation for vulnerable communities to own and manage their own futures, to shocks and to their own destinies.

We're diversifying our food box to include more cash and more vouchers. And we are looking at more vouchers because WFP has a mandate to provide food assistance, not income support – and we recognize that. So where there is the ability for us to increase our support through vouchers, we are doing that. Where there is no access to the systems to support vouchers, we are providing cash to ensure again that families have access to food that's in the market. By 2015 we expect to supply 30 to 40% of food assistance through either cash or vouchers. We are transforming logistics wizards into market analysts while integrating local information technology and banking services into the mix for maximum impact, all with the help of the private sector and other partners again in this room today.

What this means is that we're putting the focus of WFP operations where it belongs – on meeting the food assistance needs of WFP people in the field.

So as many of you have heard and remarked to me since I arrived yesterday, yes, we are shaking things up at WFP. If you want a big job, it's no longer in Rome – it's in the field. And we've reduced the number of senior positions in Rome and increased the number of senior positions in the field – because that's where we need the expertise.

In the area of nutrition, we've been doing what I feel is some of our best listening. Successful distributions of calories alone, particularly in the first thousand days, as you've all heard and most of you know, is not good enough. WFP recognized the importance during the critical first 1,000-day period of providing nutritious food assistance but again partnering with others, particularly the countries and the communities we serve as well as with other U.N. organizations, especially UNICEF and NGO partners like CARE and World Vision. It is essential to sustainability address this issue.

WFP is a part of scaling up nutrition, as you heard last night, and I serve on the leadership team of scaling up nutrition, but scaling up nutrition is a movement, and what movement requires is people. So unless people, like all of you in this room, embrace this movement to support the end of chronic malnutrition, then it's just another program. And we know that we've had a lot of programs in this area. So what the scaling up nutrition movement really requires is that we invest

our assets and our resources where right now our rhetoric is, in order to ensure that we achieve the goal of ending chronic malnutrition.

When you look closely, supplying good nutrition to young mothers and children is not too different from using drip agriculture to nourish plants in arid soils. During pregnancy and continuing through the six months of breastfeeding, nature provides a highly calibrated environment for the successful development of a healthy child. WFP integrated programs look at mother and child as one nutritional system, ensuring that both the child and caregivers have all the necessary nutrition to provide that child a healthy start when he or she is ready to start eating solid food. WFP partners with leading nutrition companies to ensure the foods we provide to children at risk from undernutrition conform to their precise needs, are easy to use and affordable.

So let's look at the sum of the changes I've placed on your breakfast table this morning. Let's consider the impact of these partnerships in constructing a future history for the next generation and the generation that follows.

Imagine with me for a moment a girl born this year in a rural African village, benefiting from all the essential micronutrients and minerals to carry her successfully through her first critical 1,000 days. At five years old, she arrives at school, fit for learning, secure in a healthy body, nourishing an active mind. She keeps learning through her teen years and eats the right food. She grows up in a safe community, one that recovers quickly from shocks and maintains a social protection safety net for the sick, the elderly and the vulnerable.

As an adult, she can own land, she can obtain credit and grow food for her family and her community. When she is ready to start a family, she does and she makes the choice, that because her body and her mind are already prepared to embrace the responsibilities of parenthood. And then her son or daughter is born and 20 years pass, and that child takes his or her place in the community as a healthy, educated young adult. It's possible. The year lies somewhere beyond 2050. Together three generations will have crossed the great deserts of human oppression known as hunger and poverty. Then, and only then, in the world that lies before us, a new generation born into freedom from want can build a different future, a future built on wisdom in harmony with air, water, sunshine and soil that feeds this planet and gives energy for life.

I, for a very long time, admired the World Food Prize event because visionaries who see the real possibility of this dream, this vision that I've just described, come together from across the globe to celebrate the success of those making this dream a reality. This room is full of believers.

Some of you have heard me tell the story about my visit to Bangladesh. I was in Bangladesh in one of the poorest regions of Southern Bangladesh in a school where children were receiving WFP fortified biscuits for lunch. After lunch they came into an auditorium, they gave me a picture, I clapped, they danced, I clapped. Then in English they sang, "We Shall Overcome," and I cried. And I had all this press with me, and they said, "You never cry. We have gone with you. You have seen babies dying of malnutrition. You don't ever cry." I said, "Because in those situations what I see is work that needs to be performed and it's about getting busy doing the work. What I see here are children who believe that their life is going to be better, that things



will be different for them.” We want to believe the same dream where I came from here in the United States. And it did get better. And shame on us if we don't make it better for them.

Thank you.

### **Ambassador Quinn**

My goodness, my goodness, wow! Ambassador Cousin, the first thing I have to share with you is that standing ovations are not a standard feature at the World Food Prize. Wow! Usually I need like a double espresso to get going in the morning, but today we had a double dose of inspiration with the Secretary-General and now with your presentation.

I'm looking at my staff to make sure that all of the Secretary-General's staff have left the room before I say what I'm about to say, but I didn't think anybody could go over the bar that he set last night and this morning, but you're right up there with him. Wow, what a wonderful, wonderful presentation! And I told you Ambassador Cousin was filled with ideas and energy, and you saw firsthand. I don't know – if you do this when you're jetlagged, I don't know what you're like when you're fully rested.

A couple things. One is, one of the partners of WFP, World Food Program (since we're WFP, World Food Prize), is Kemin Industries here in Des Moines and one of our World Food Prize sponsors. And Chris Nelson, their president, asked me to be sure to convey to you his good wishes, and I think he may be in Bangladesh himself today, so he was sorry he couldn't be here.

Second, I want to note that your program of empowering women in these remote villages and giving them the money and husbands listening, that they're moving towards at least my vision and version of the modern world, because my wife, Li Son has had the money in our family now for 38 years, and I've been listening to her the whole time. Finally, I'm going to get off a letter later this afternoon to one of the airlines and say that, at least each year during World Food Day and around that, there should be a direct flight from Rome to Des Moines. It says Des Moines International Airport.

So please join me one more time in thanking Ambassador Cousin.