

**PRESENTATION: SPEEDING THE FORCES FOR CHANGE TO END HUNGER  
IN AFRICA**

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Thank you, thank you very much, thank you, thank you very much. Thank you very much, Ambassador Quinn, for those very warm remarks. It is true that I spent some time here in the Midwest. And in fact I think the memories stayed with me so forcefully that I had left my coat at home. And so I bought a new one in Manhattan, only to discover that you’re having a beautiful Indian summer.

But I recall as a student coming from Africa to the Midwest and going through my first winter in Minnesota. I accepted that to keep warm, one had to put on layers and layers of clothing, even though as a tropical child I found it cumbersome. But there was one item that I swore never to use, because I thought they were not elegant — these were the earmuffs — until one Sunday afternoon I went out to get something to eat. It was so cold that I thought I was going to lose my ears. So the next day I went out and bought the biggest pair I could find, elegant or not. And learned a lifelong lesson — that you don’t walk into a situation and behave as if you know better than the natives.

Let me start with the World Food Prize laureates, David Beckmann and Jo Luck. Ambassador Quinn, and dear friends, I want to thank you for being here in your numbers and for the very warm welcome you have given me. I am deeply honored to be here to pay tribute to our 2010 World Food Prize laureates on the eve of World Food Day and to examine where we are in the global fight to reduce hunger.

Once again, I want to congratulate David Beckmann and Jo Luck on winning this most prestigious and meaningful award. Your work and commitment reminds us all that life’s greatest calling is to serve others and particularly to help them enjoy their basic human rights — and this includes, of course, the right not to go hungry.

And that is why it is so distressing that one billion of our fellow human beings will today go without sufficient food. The scale of the challenge was underlined last month when world leaders met to review the progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

They heard that while the proportion of people suffering from hunger is declining, the pace of progress remains unsatisfactory. Without coordinated and urgent action, the most basic goal of reducing poverty and world hunger is not likely to be met by 2015 in many countries. Closing this gap is not just a moral imperative; it also lies at the core of a more secure and equitable world.

That is why we should be relieved to see an unprecedented global effort with a common purpose and ambition. The aim is not only to feed the hungry today but to eliminate hunger by creating sustainable, secure and global food system.

Achieving this ambition requires fundamental reform of economic and social policies across the planet. With the world’s population continuing to grow, food and nutrition security is a challenge for every country. There

remains too many countries where people go hungry and many more where the threat of food shortages is all too real.

But there is one continent where the challenge is particularly urgent and serious. Africa is the only continent which does not grow enough food to feed itself. It alone has failed in recent decades to see agricultural productivity keep pace with the growing population. Unfortunately, as we heard from Ambassador Quinn, Africa was bypassed by the science-based agricultural development built on the ideas of Norman Borlaug.

These ideas, as we know, dramatically transformed agricultural production in Asia. Africa is also the continent most threatened by the impact of climate change. Increasing temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns are increasing water stress and risk making many millions of acres of land much less productive in the future. Indeed, such changes are already taking place, and it is so that the challenge of agriculture in Africa is what I want to focus on today.

It is a challenge which can only be overcome by working in partnership with the continent's smallholder farmers. For in Africa and across much of the developing world, the agricultural system is powered by smallholder farmers, more than three-quarters of whom are women. The vast majority of these farmers, as I said who are women, often have to cope on their own with very little support.

But while agriculture contributes one third of the continent's GDP and provides most of its food, it has received far too little support — I would say minimum support. African governments in the final decades of the last century pulled back from desperately needed investments in agriculture at a time when the private sector and market forces were unable or unwilling to fill the void. Public expenditure in agriculture and agricultural research and development for training farmers and supporting them was slashed.

The impact of these policies by a national government was made far worse by a dramatic downturn in overseas development assistance for agriculture by our rich partners.

The result was that the smallholder farmers struggled to access both the knowledge and resources needed to improve their crops and farms. They were forced to rely on poor seeds planted in depleted soils. Poor management of land, water resources, along with weak national and regional economic infrastructure links also held back agricultural development.

And African farmers also found themselves severely disadvantaged by an unbalanced global trade regime which sets up barriers to potential export markets, prevents the development of food industries while allowing surpluses to be dumped on the continent.

The result of all these factors was fallen agricultural productivity, farmers trapped in poverty, growing shortages of food, and millions more going hungry.

It was to address all these problems and to understand why the lessons learned from Asia's success with agricultural transformation had not touched Africa that, as U.N. Secretary-General, I commissioned a study from the Inter-Academy Council. And I think several people who served on that counsel are here with us today. And let me say thank you, even if it appears belated. [You can clap – it's okay.]

The conclusions and recommendations of that study have led to the concept of a uniquely African Green Revolution, modern and sustainable agriculture with an emphasis on improved seeds, integrated soil fertility and water management practices. And by basing the revolution firmly on smallholders it builds on Norman Borlaug's pioneering principle that food and nutrition security was best achieved by integrating agricultural research into appropriate technologies for the farmers.

It was to play my part in helping bring this transformation about that I was delighted to accept, on leaving the U.N., an invitation to chair a new organization, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.

We are in our early days yet, but I'm very proud of the work that AGRA is doing. With our partners at the national level, as well as international, we are beginning to turn these ambitions into reality on the ground. Our aim is to help build the systems needed to strengthen the critical links in the entire value chain, to make smallholder farmers and smallholder farming productive, sustainable and profitable.

We are doing this by identifying, supporting and extending proven local solutions for the benefits of not just hundreds of farmers, but thousands, and eventually, we hope millions. In particular, AGRA is starting to work with countries, donors, NGOs and farmers' organizations to develop and implement strategies in those areas with the greatest potential to become Africa's breadbaskets, or what you call farm belts in the U.S.

By concentrating resources and efforts in regions which can grow a large share of the continent's staple food requirements, we hope to make the breakthrough needed to deliver food and nutrition security within Africa and eventually create surplus for global export.

What is also important is that African governments have themselves recognized the economic and social benefits of investing in their farmers and the rural economy. Seven years ago they adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program. This called on all African governments to put a minimum of 10 percent of their budgets, national budgets, into agriculture with the aim of achieving 6 percent growth per year.

This African impetus, along with the commitment of the Millennium Development Goals, spurred in turn a new drive by developed countries to support Africa's agricultural growth. Indeed, never before has there been such a collective drive for change. This encompasses civil society organizations, philanthropic foundations, and multinational corporations. I think you are all aware of the rural foundations like Bill and Melinda Gates and Rockefeller are playing in this revolution. And it includes the U.S. Administration's Feed the Future initiative and the G8 countries' pledge at Lakila.

From the actions of governments, the Rome-based agencies and CGIAR to, first and foremost, the people of Africa, food and nutrition security now sits firmly and rightly at the top of the development agenda. And this is unprecedented. It's an unprecedented coalition, and it's having an impact.

I saw some of this progress for myself when I recently visited farmers in Mali, and I'm happy to see that the Malian minister of agriculture is here with us. And heard from them, heard from the farmers the difference that access to high-yielding seeds and fertilizers are making to their livelihoods.

The transformation is remarkable, and the potential is even more exciting. Farmers are growing new varieties of sorghum, maize, rice, that are drought-tolerant and disease-resistant. They are using seeds developed through conventional breeding techniques that can be shipped and developed by African scientists and institutions. National agricultural research organizations, new seed companies and agrodealerships are all part of this transformation.

Farmers are also being trained in sustainable soil management techniques, are also coming together to help to shape their future. By organizing themselves in farmers' organizations, smallholder farmers are freeing themselves from their dependence on middlemen who can take up to 30 percent of the value of the farmer's crop.

These organizations are helping farmers improve access to storage, to information on market prices, and where necessary, to credit so that they are not forced to sell their produce when the prices are low.

In fact, last year I visited a farming region in Kenya, and we went to a farm. Next to the farm was a small room, about a third of this stage, and on the wall was a blackboard. The vertical side showed the crops they had for sale — corn, maize, onions — and then the horizontal side showed the cities — Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa — and it indicated the prices that the goods were going for in each of these cities. And the farmers then made the sale with their cell phone. So I walked away saying — it's amazing how they've been able to establish their own Chicago Board of Trade in this little corner of Kenya. And it was working, and it was very, very exciting to see that.

But more inspiring than hearing from them, from these farmers, what difference these changes are making today, were their hopes for the future. They are confident that with continued support they can meet increased demands for their crops. Similar programs are at work across the continent, ensuring sustainable food production and changing people's lives.

In Kenya, farmers have quadrupled production of maize and other crops by using lime to revitalize acidic soils. The local lime companies have donated the cost of transporting soil nutrients to the farmers. The Equity Bank in Kenya has made finance available at favorable rates to farmers. And the National Agricultural Research Institute is developing improved crop varieties and coordinating the entire effort.

This project's success could reverberate across much of East Africa and Southern Africa. In the southern highlands of Tanzania 700,000 smallholder farmers produced 5 million metric tons of maize in 2009, more than any other region in the country, utilizing improved seeds and fertilizer, distributed through the AGRA agrodealers program. Luckily, the World Bank has been so encouraged by the results that it is now providing \$160 million to scale up the initiative nationwide.

In Malawi greatly improved seeds and yields, because of access to affordable fertilizers, have led to the country becoming a net exporter of maize for the last four years.

But this success, which has been driven by targeted outside funding in itself reveals the challenges the small farmers face. We now need to see the sustained support and reliable markets in which to sell their crops to help this tremendous but still temporarily fragile success become permanent.

We are seeing as well the World Food Programme working to expand access by sourcing more and more of its food aid in Africa from local farmers. One of the program's regular trading partners, for example, is a group of women farmers in Kenya. Through the World Food Programme, Bread for the World, Heifer International, and many other actors, the central role that women farmers play is finally being recognized. But we must do more to help them by removing the barriers in their way.

We cannot forget that the women who produce most of Africa's food are particularly disadvantaged economically and socially. They are not considered heads of households. Rarely do they have titles to land, and their interests are all too often overlooked by traditional financial institutions. We need practical measures from field to market to remove these obstacles so they have a voice and a stake right through the agricultural value chain. This must include innovative ways of ensuring that their experience and aspirations help us shape agricultural policy.

But it is not just women farmers who have found it difficult in the past to access investment. Despite the huge importance of agriculture to Africa's economies, the continent's commercial banks typically extend less than 3 percent of their lending to that sector. We have to put this right. Agriculture is a business and must be financed as such.

The huge need to provide farmers an agribusiness with affordable credit is beginning to be met, but we have a long, long way to go. AGRA and its partners, for example, have been able to mobilize \$160 million in

affordable loans from local commercial banks through credit guarantees. This is unprecedented and an effort that we need to expand and ensure succeeds.

We are seeing as well investment in and support for agrodealer networks, which are building thousands of rural businesses across the continent and ensuring that the inputs are available to the farmers. These are helping millions of farmers in remote areas gain access to basic ingredients and is leading to the success we have seen through increased yields of improved seeds and fertilizers.

My dear friends, the challenges remain immense. We are only at the start of a very long and grueling journey. But the balance is changing. There was a real sense of optimism, as we heard from Ambassador Quinn, of the first African Green Revolution forum in Accra where about a thousand people attended. They included government leaders, parliamentarians, bankers, farmers, civil society organizations and scientists and researchers. It was fascinating to see CEOs from corporations, bankers at this event.

It is very rare if you ever see a business, a CEO, a banker, at African agricultural events. So we were encouraged, and it's an indication that the private sector is beginning to take interest and realize that there are prospects for investments in African agriculture.

But even more impressive was the realization that fundamental change is now within our grasp. I think we left the forum in Accra with clear ideas of what must be accomplished to accelerate this Green Revolution.

There's a huge task ahead of us. Many millions are still going hungry. Populations continue to grow. Climate change is almost by the day adding to the pressures on Africa's land. But I remain optimistic, optimistic about Africa's chances to turn the corner once and for all. And I think with the partnership that we have established and the energy that we are bringing to this issue, we can do it. And if we miss this opportunity, I don't know when we are going to get another one.

The way forward is clear. We need to build on our successes, listen to the farmers, innovate as we go, and scale up what we know works.

Like any successful revolution, the goal must always be permanent reform — or as somebody told me earlier this morning, the first step must be followed by a second, a third and a fourth, but we often forget that.

It is a challenge which all of us must work to overcome, because we all have a stake in Africa's future. Without a prosperous, stable and peaceful Africa, our ambitions for our world will not succeed. We need African government to stand by and support their farmers through resource allocation and through right policies, right economic policies that also are environmental sensitive and are pro-poor and pro-rural communities.

But it is equally important that the developed world upholds its commitments and promises to Africa and continues to work with Africa on this agricultural transformation as a priority.

The private sector too has a huge role to play to invest in the new opportunities opening up. This includes investment in commercial farms, which can both encourage economies of scale and foster the uptake of new technologies.

This is not a simple matter of big farms or small ones. Indeed, when done responsibly, large-scale systems can play an important role in directly supporting small farmers through technical advice and support and access to markets. However, care must always be taken to ensure that local communities are consulted, and their rights to land and natural resources are also protected.

As we know, this partnership approach has not always been followed in the past. So, dear friends, I don't, and I know you don't, underestimate the difficulties ahead or the distance we still have to travel. We will need to harness effectively all your talents and energies to help us reach the destination we've set ourselves.

But if we stand together — governments, civil society, the private sector, the scientists, and the farmers — and sustain our efforts, I assure you a unique African Green Revolution is within our grasp. It will be a huge step forward, banishing hunger and meeting our ambitions for a just and peaceful world.

And finally let me say that it holds out the hope that World Food Day will not in the future be a rebuke for the one billion people who don't have enough to eat, but a celebration, a celebration of a food and nutrition secure world.

Thank you very much.