

Press Statement of the World Food Prize Laureates Borlaug Dialogue, Des Moines, Iowa October 30, 2024

DES MOINES, IA, UNITED STATES, October 30, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- We are struck that the U.S. elections, just one week away, have included almost no discussion of world hunger. The unprecedented progress against world hunger of recent decades has begun to reverse. The number and percentage of the world's people in chronic hunger has increased from 581 million (7.5%) in 2019 to 733 million (9.1%) in 2023. This has menacing implications for peace and prosperity everywhere. But past successes show that we know how to get progress back on track. What's most needed is political leadership, especially from the United States.



World Food Prize Laurate Heidi Kühn

The COVID pandemic depressed the world economy and disrupted world trade. It led to global inflation and then high interest rates. Many low-income countries are now weighed down with impossible debt, much of it through no fault of their own. As a group, they are now spending more on debt service than on health and education. Climate change has hit tropical countries hardest, undercutting the livelihoods of many subsistence farm families. Famine and near-famine conditions have reemerged around the world. There has also been a huge surge in violent conflicts, draining money and political attention away from investment in a better life for all people.

But perhaps the most important thing to know about world hunger is that we know how to get progress going again. We can invest in farm productivity through better seeds, soil management, pest management, information, technology, irrigation and finance and then invest in the infrastructure to help get food to markets more quickly, less expensively and with less loss and waste. We can make sure more of the food that is produced is local, nutritious and climate resilient.

Hundreds of people from around the world have gathered at the Borlaug Dialogue in Des

Moines, Iowa, this week to discuss these and more ways to restore progress against hunger. This year's World Food Prize Laureates, Dr. Geoffrey Hawtin and Dr. Cary Fowler, have provided leadership in preserving and protecting the world's heritage of crop biodiversity and mobilizing this critical resource to defend against threats to global food security. The past Laureates in Des Moines bring records of success on a host of issues, including the removal of landmines, improvements in food production and nutrition and coping with climate change.

The presidents of three African nations, the World Bank and the African Development Bank have come to the Borlaug Dialogue this year to share strategies to lift the crippling debt burden on low-income countries, expand agricultural production in spite of climate change and foster peace.

But can the world muster the political will to seize the opportunities we see? We want to flag four upcoming points of decision.

First, the current and incoming government of the U.S. can and should provide strong support and collaboration for the new Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty. This initiative is being launched by the Group of 20, leaders of the 20 most powerful economies in the world, at their meeting in Brazil next month, led by World Food Prize Laureate President Lula da Silva. The Global Alliance is designed to mobilize increased effort to restore progress against hunger and poverty and secure support for governments that want to implement proven approaches nationwide.

Second, the U.S. should lead a robust replenishment of the World Bank's fund for low-income countries alongside other governments this December. This decision on the amount of funding donors will make available over the next three years is essential to help low-income countries with post-COVID burdens.

Third, the U.S. can amplify and lead other industrialized countries to answer Pope Francis' call for the nations of the world to take bold steps to resolve the post-COVID debt burdens of low-income countries in 2025, which he has proclaimed a Jubilee year.

Fourth, U.S. voters should give some thought to how different candidates running for local, state and federal government in this election will affect families in their communities and abroad who are struggling with hunger. Their choices will have a big impact on renewed progress against hunger in the United States and around the world.

As we gather in Iowa, in the heartland of the United States, we are also thinking beyond the U.S. election and planning ahead to bring about a world without poverty and hunger. Though COVID, climate change and conflict have put us on the back foot for now, we are optimistic about getting the world back on track to eradicate hunger and poverty. The energy, ideas and cooperation here at the Borlaug Dialogue represent a step forward. Hungry people are struggling for a better life. U.S. leadership can give them hope.

Signed in partnership,

World Food Prize Laureates

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