Senator Lugar's remarks on Capitol Hill celebrating the passage of the Global Food Security Act

By Senator Richard G. Lugar (Ret.)
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In our current political environment we have developed the expectation that Congress doesn’t work; that partisanship will rule the day; and that rational governance is too much to expect. We fear that the best we can hope for is a benign stalemate that subordinates vision to political survival and thoughtful debate to party talking points.

The bill we are celebrating today is evidence that our government can work. It is a compromise, as are all bills that become law. But it is also a manifestation of our ambitions and hopes for transforming the entire globe into a hunger-free environment. This is a big idea. But the United States must aspire to big ideas.

We have had a lot of discussion in our country about what makes America strong and what constitutes greatness in a nation. We can debate that point, but there are some general truths that we can’t ignore. One is that greatness requires not just economic ambitions, but also moral ones. If a country loses compassion for the poorest and hungriest people of the world or refuses to make sacrifices for universal values of tolerance, justice, and freedom, it diminishes its own standing abroad and undercuts its integrity at home.

A second truth is that greatness cannot be found in an insular and protectionist view of our global responsibilities. It is an old and seductive notion to think that we can protect our economy and our security by rejecting trade, immigrants, and alliances. But history teaches us otherwise and the explosion of information technology has confronted us each day with the connectedness of the modern world and the folly of thinking that isolating ourselves can secure our future.

As a nation, I believe we have no choice but to lead. We have no choice but to struggle with global problems, because so many of our own cannot be solved without progress abroad.

The United State has many strengths and talents, but few are as profound as our capabilities in producing food. We have unrivaled farmers, researchers, and manufacturers who make astounding advances in food science almost every day.
In the spirit that produced this bill, I believe we should commit our ingenuity to producing a 21st Century Green Revolution. Undergirded by the strength of American scientists and producers and their talented counterparts in like-minded nations, I believe this goal is entirely achievable. We can raise productivity of both staple and indigenous crops, build resilience to climate change, stimulate scientific collaboration, and greatly increase access to modern farming techniques for millions of smallholders, many of whom are women. A 21st Century Green Revolution would have the potential to transform politics in many unstable regions of the globe. It would help strengthen the global economy. It would reduce conflict, save millions of lives, and enrich the prospects for tens of millions of children.

I congratulate all the sponsors and dedicated organizations for their hard work in shaping and passing the Global Food Security Act. I especially want to thank Senator Bob Casey who joined with me eight years ago to sponsor the original version of the bill. Over the course of those years, this bill always benefited from bipartisan ideas and cooperation coming from both chambers. I am optimistic that this collaboration will continue to be the foundation for advancing progress on a 21st Century Green Revolution. I am excited by what we can achieve together and I thank you all.