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NGO CSW65 Virtual Forum: App x NGO CSW65 Virtual Forum: Virtu x

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 Home Schedule People Partners Public Forum Register Account

PARALLEL EVENT **Mountain Women Empowerment Through the Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model**

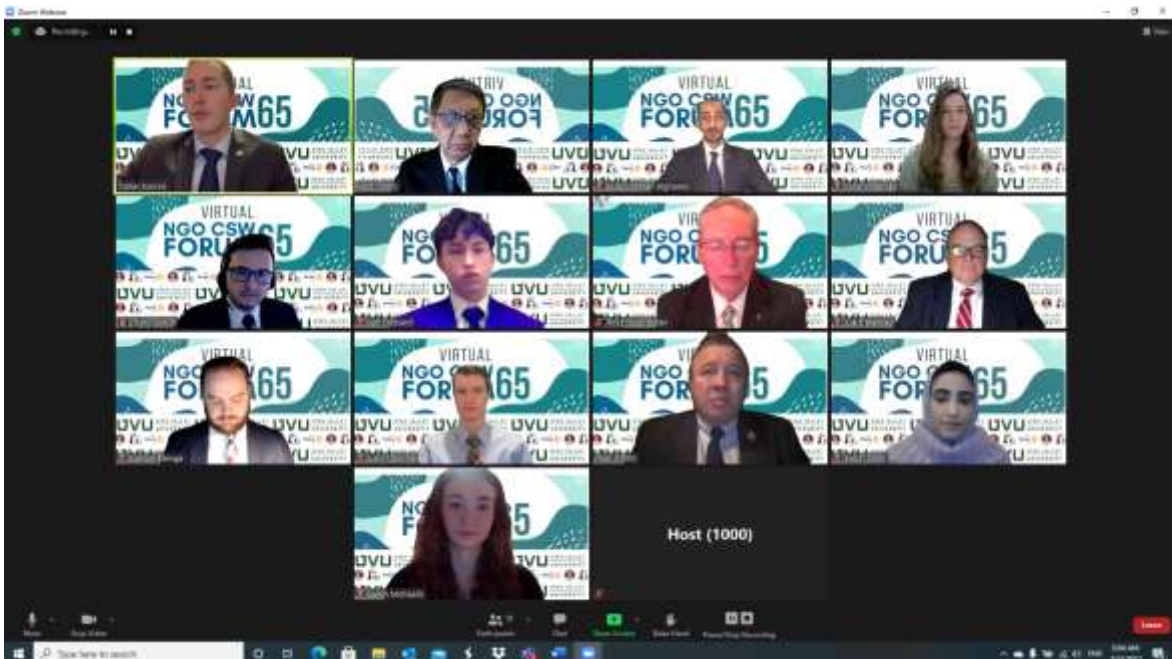
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|  <b>Baktybek Abdrisaev</b><br>Utah Valley University -Lecturer<br>Utah International Mountain Forum - Mentor.               |  <b>Dallas Karren</b><br>Utah International Mountain Forum<br>Vice-President                                      |
|  <b>Clark Merkley</b><br>Rotary International - District 5420 Assistant District Governor; Past President, Orem Rotary Club |  <b>Jeff Hibbard</b><br>Utah International Mountain Forum<br>Foreign Affairs Club Vice President                  |
|  <b>Cody Conklin</b><br>Utah International Mountain Forum & UVU Rotaract   |  <b>Byan Alghanmi</b><br>Utah International Mountain Forum<br>Rotaract - member                                  |
|  <b>Albeny Singh</b><br>Utah Valley University Rotaract Club<br>Vice President  |  <b>Marissa Funke, Member</b><br>Utah Valley University   |
|  <b>Sarah Michaelis</b><br>International Rescue Committee   |  <b>Samuel Elzinga</b><br>Utah International Mountain Forum   |
|  <b>Carlos Alarco</b><br>Utah Valley University<br>Associate Director - Education Abroad                                  |  <b>Alghanmi Abdulrahman</b><br>Utah International Mountain Forum<br>VP - Sustainable Mountain Development Club |
|  <b>Yana Andersen</b><br>Utah Valley University Rotaract<br>President   |  <b>Amy Barnett</b><br>Utah Valley University<br>Program Director - Global Events                               |
|  <b>Ross Butler, Ph.D.</b><br>Russian Academy of Natural Sciences<br>UN Representative ECOSOC                             |  <b>Liam Dowling</b><br>Russian Academy of Natural Sciences   |
|  <b>Baldomero Lago</b><br>Utah Valley University<br>Chief Global Officer  |  |

🕒 6:00 AM - 7:30 AM MDT on Monday, 22 March  
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**Sponsoring Organization:**  
Russian Academy of Natural Sciences

On the morning of March 22, 2021, at 6am MST, members of the Utah International Mountain Forum, (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University, (UVU), had the opportunity to participate in the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65). They hosted through Student Engaged Learning (SEL) the parallel event titled, “*Mountain Women Empowerment Through The Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model,*” which was co-sponsored by the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (RANS), a non-government organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the UVU Global Engagement Office. For the first time ever it was done virtually because of COVID-19.

Prior to the event, students at UVU worked diligently together through SEL to prepare for this highest gender-focused forum of the United Nations. SEL encourages students to gain professional skills while addressing real-world issues on local and international levels with university faculty serving as mentors. Through our initiatives, we seek to raise awareness among the local and international communities about the necessity to join efforts of global mountain communities and activities of international organizations, like the United Nations, with the aim to promote improvements of the lives of the mountain people, their families, and gender issues both in the Rocky Mountains and worldwide. SEL presents an academic program uniquely distinguishing UVU among other academic institutions both in the State of Utah and in North America.



### *Members of the UIMF delegation during the parallel event*

Our parallel event advocated for mountain women, girls, and families, who are among the poorest and most neglected on national and international levels. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, over ninety percent of individuals residing in the mountains live in developing countries counting more than 634 million located in rural areas in which the predominant share live in poverty. These vulnerable mountain communities are marginalized, underrepresented, and essentially ignored in policy making. Their situation is worsened, and their circumstances compounded by modern challenges such as food insecurity, climate change, and out-migration. As a major contribution to this advocacy campaign, since 2007, UVU under the umbrella of the Mountain Partnership and FAO-UN has regularly hosted international Women of the Mountains Conferences.

In 2015, the fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference was hosted for the first time by UIMF through SEL in Utah and highlighted by the UN Secretary General's report on SMD A/74/209, from 22 July 2019, the only student group internationally. Therefore, since 2016 for the UIMF delegations it was and continue to be an important priority to both promote decisions and recommendations about mountain women and families of the WOMC 2015 by participating at CSW61, CSW62, CSW63, CSW64 and advocating for the inclusion of language about mountain women and communities in the final document of those highest gender-focused forums of the United Nations. Unfortunately, it did not happen yet due to which the UIMF delegation made a new attempt to reach this goal during CSW65.

As part of SEL implementation, the visit provided an opportunity for Samuel Elzinga, President of UIMF due to his graduation from UVU to transfer the power to me as a vice-President of UIMF: I lead the delegation, while Samuel advised me when necessary as its member. As a result, I coordinated all student members of the delegation activities through a task list, which contained assignments affiliated with logistics, protocol, communications, design, both due dates and the dates when assignments were accomplished in addition to contact information for each student.

As the first step in preparations for CSW65, UIMF members researched and jointly prepared and then provided in October 2020 for the consideration a draft of a written statement to the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences and Utah-China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, (UCFISHD&C), two NGOs in consultative status with

ECOSOC. According to the United Nations rules with NGOs accreditation, they are eligible to submit for the approval of the ECOSOC their statement for any UN forum with their attendance. On December 13, 2020, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations approved the [written statement](#) co-sponsored by both of them for the 65th session of the commission on the status of Women (CSW65). The statement was distributed as an official document of the UN and urged the Commission to have mountain women and girls in the focus of the 2030 Development Agenda. The statement also highlighted the role of the SEL model developed at UVU for students' professional growth, building ties with NGOs like RANS and UCFISHD&C, and advocacy of SMD agenda and mountain women in particular.

An important task for our visit was preparations of our statements during the parallel event, which took a lot of time and effort. This was a very long procedure which required weekly meetings to discuss content for each member of the delegation. Each of them were in need to learn how to integrate in one page document main points about the SEL model and its ability to advocate the mountain women also personal contributions from each member. I was responsible to finalize the draft with the approval of UIMF mentor, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev.

One of the important priorities was also for our members to engage in the visit local community groups and in particular Orem Rotary Club, which partners with UVU Rotaract club during several semesters. Due to that, UIMF members participated in a special [fundraising](#) organized by Orem Rotary with selling Oranges, which provided funds also to cover some expenses for our visit.

Another important and interesting activity for members of our delegation was the participation in a series of preparatory events for CSW65 organized by NGO/CSW-NY. I provided schedules of events to members and many of them were able to attend Youth Activists: [Effective Advocacy in International Fora](#), [Presentation Skills Workshop](#), [UN Advocacy Training](#); as well as the events [Climate Crisis and Climate Action by and for Women](#) and [CSW65 Chair Address to NGOs](#), and learn how to be effective advocacy professionals at the United Nations. Therefore, when the day of the parallel event arrived on Monday, March 22, 2021, all members of the delegation knew already what was expected from them.



*Dallas Karren moderating the event*

According to the agenda of the event, which we designed with UIMF members, I opened the floor by [\*providing welcoming remarks\*](#) and showcased Utah as one of the promising examples in Sustainable Mountain Development. This activity is also an important reminder of the pioneers and women who contributed to building the SMD model that citizens now enjoy. In preparation for the event, I fundraised with UVU Rotaract, aided students in developing their statements, organized the event, and contributed significant time to research and other preparations.



*Dr. Baldomero Lago, Chief International Officer at UVU*

Dr. Lago [\*spoke\*](#) on the accomplishments of UVU students and members of the UIMF in particular by hosting the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City on August

26-28, 2019, and advocacy of SMD through SEL and how it distinguishes UVU in the state of Utah, nationally, and internationally.



*Dr. Rusty Butler, Main Representative at UN for Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (RANS)*

Dr. Butler [highlighted](#) UVU student accomplishments such as speaking at the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in 2018 and being able to add language about mountain communities in the Outcome Document of the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference held in Salt Lake City from August 26-28, 2019.



*Mr. Clark Merkley, Assistant District Governor of Rotary International District 542*

Mr. Merkley *showcased* the importance and results of partnership between Orem Rotary and UVU Rotaract as well as with UIMF both in promoting the six goals of Rotary International and advocating for SMD.



*Samuel Elzinga*

Samuel Elzinga, UIMF & UNA-USA President; Samuel *reflected* on UIMF achievements during his time as President and the progress that has been made in the efforts to push for mountain women and girls to be included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



*Abdulrahman Alghanmi*

Abdulrahman Alghanmi, UIMF Member; Abdulrahman Alghanmi [shared](#) personal experience from living in Saudi Arabian mountains and commented how the language on mountain communities was not included in the Final Document of CSW63 by decision of the Secretariat based on geographic preferences.

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*Byan Alghanmi*

Byan Alghanmi, UIMF & Rotaract Member; Byan [expressed](#) her efforts with the UIMF to seek justice for women and gender equality nationally and on the international levels. Through SEL, she has been able to become a contributor to this agenda.



*Yana Anderson*



Yana Anderson, Rotaract President; Yana *spoke* of her contributions to the SEL and SMD agenda through involvement in Rotaract and UIMF. As President of UVU Rotaract, Yana played an integral role in raising funds for local charities, commemorating World Polio Day, and community involvement.



*Cody Conklin*

Cody Conklin, UIMF & Rotaract Member; Cody *gave* perspective on the excellence of Utah’s model after living near various mountain ranges in the U.S. Cody has participated in numerous UIMF activities and focused on SMD efforts in the mountainous countries of Romania and Austria.



*Liam Dowling*

Liam Dowling, UIMF Member; Liam Dowling [\*presented\*](#) his research on the importance of building relationships with states such as the Republic of Georgia as a follow up to ties between UVU and Permanent mission of Georgia to the UN since 2015 in addition to lessons learned from attending seminars before CSW65.



*Jeff Hibbard*

Jeff Hibbard, Foreign Affairs Club Vice-President; Jeff [\*explained\*](#) the deforestation situation and status of women in Nepal. Jeff was able to share how he participated in the UN International Mountain Day at UVU in 2019 and 2020 as well as UVU's 2019 diplomatic conference.



*Sarah Michealis*

Sarah Michealis, UIMF Member; Sarah [detailed](#) her study abroad in the Kyrgyzstan mountains and attributed her professional successes to SEL and the UIMF. Sarah was able to speak on the knowledge and experiences with mountain refugees she has had as an employee of the International Rescue Committee in Salt Lake City, Utah.

As part of the event, Samuel Elzinga showed the audience a short video with his and two peers' oral presentations at the High-Level Political Forum in 2018 to remind UIMF efforts in advocating SMD at the UN. At the end of the parallel event we showed another video that acknowledged and featured the students at the founding of the UIMF and their preparations to host WOMC 2015. Each student presenter and VIP also were given the opportunity to answer relevant questions during a Q&A session.

To the success of our visit contributed the support group which included: Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, UVU Lecturer & UIMF Mentor; Carlos Alarco, UVU Associate Director of Education Abroad; Amy Barnett, UVU Program Director of Global Events; Albany Singh, UIMF Member; and Marissa Funke, UIMF Member.

The efforts of student-members of the UIMF and the supporting faculty and individuals made this event a success, and we plan on continuing our involvement and reporting on our progress at CSW66.

***Dallas Karren, Vice President of the UIMF***