

Statement
**Parallel event “Mountain Women Empowerment Through the Inclusive
Student-Engaged Learning Model”**
65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Samuel Elzinga,
President,
Utah International Mountain Forum,
A coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University

I am graduating this semester from UVU and this is my last activity as President of the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at UVU. And I am happy that Dallas Karren, UIMF Vice President is able to replace me and lead this great team further.

UIMF advocates for the mountain women, girls, and families, who are among the poorest and most neglected on national and international levels. I was glad to implement through UIMF a Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model. SEL encourages students to gain professional skills while addressing real-world issues on local and international levels with faculty serving as advising mentors. As our major contribution to this advocacy campaign, UIMF members utilized SEL to host the Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference in 2015 in Utah. UIMF was also highlighted by the UN Secretary General’s report on SMD A/74/209, the only student group worldwide to have received such recognition.

As president of UIMF, my primary mission was to coordinate advocacy efforts within our coalition to support the broader message of SMD. Our constituent clubs include: Rotaract, Foreign Affairs club, National Security Society, Sustainable Mountain Development club, and others. Each of these clubs host events throughout the year, and I am primarily responsible for letting other coalition constituent clubs aware that these events are occurring. In addition to these events, I help interface with local community and NGO leaders, like the city of Orem and the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences to support our SMD advocacy efforts to support the broader SMD agenda, as well as the points regarding mountain women and girls. Under my leadership, UIMF has advocated for mountain women and girls at the 62nd, 63rd and 64th sessions of the Commissions on the Status of Women, the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City in the United States, and countless on-campus events devoted solely to the cause of women and the mountains. We additionally have had the opportunity to host Permanent Representatives of Uzbekistan, Russia, Austria, Tajikistan, and many others to the United Nations on our campus, where we arranged specialized meetings with them to discuss their country’s agendas regarding the situation and challenges faced by women and families in mountain regions.

While our coalition has achieved through a student engaged learning many successes in advocacy of the SMD agenda in the state of Utah and elsewhere, we are still not able for the mountain families and women to be featured in the final document of any CSW. We are raising our voices for this cause again and inviting participants of CSW65 to support our efforts.

I would like to share with you all a short video showing how through SEL two of my peers and I made an oral statement about mountain communities and targets during the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2018.