

Statement

Parallel event “Mountain Women Empowerment Through the Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model”

65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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Good morning everyone! As moderator and head of this delegation, I welcome you all to this parallel event, “Mountain Women Empowerment through the Inclusive Student Engaged Learning Model,” hosted by students from Utah Valley University and members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF). UIMF was created as a coalition of student clubs at UVU in 2011 to advocate for the cause of sustainable mountain development (SMD) in the State of Utah and globally. Many of its members, like myself, have affiliated themselves with UIMF because of previous experiences with mountain communities. During two-years of religious service in Colombia, including Bogotá, Bucaramanga, and Cúcuta, I have witnessed the striking contrast in economic development and overall prosperity between urban and mountainous populations. Therefore, when I joined UIMF, it allowed me to learn and advocate for the SMD agenda by hosting International Mountain Day observations, fundraisings, and service projects benefiting local communities in Utah county to name a few.

SMD advocacy also encourages students to study how our mountainous state became now one of the best in the nation economically. However, in 1847 it was a place for a couple of thousand first pioneers to take a refuge from religious persecution. They had little provisions, were under continued threat of violence and forced to survive in the driest and inhospitable region in the western United States. And many of them were women, who contributed to building today's “Heaven on Earth” not only their hard labor but also love and care for their families and children.

Therefore since 2007, our university regularly hosts international Women of the Mountains Conferences (WOMC) under the umbrella of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to raise awareness about challenges experienced by mountain women and families globally and the role of women in creating Utah model of sustainable development. In 2015, the fourth WOMC was hosted by UIMF members via the Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model. SEL encourages students to

work as a group on certain practical issues and learn professional skills while university faculty mentor them in that endeavor.

Since 2017, UIMF advocates for SMD at every session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It will be a special privilege for me further to introduce 10 UIMF members who will demonstrate how SEL allows them to host both this event and three VIP guests. They will also share their own stories about their contribution to mountain women advocacy.

I hope that our event would allow you to understand why UIMF was highlighted for mountain women advocacy by the United Nations Secretary General's Report on SMD in 2016 and 2019, the only student group globally, and how through SEL became a full-fledged contributor to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a special focus on mountain communities, families and women.