

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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A coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University

I am a recent political science graduate of Utah Valley University and current employee of the International Rescue Committee based in Salt Lake City, Utah. I am grateful for the opportunity to be here with my peers representing our school. Through support from the Utah Valley University Office of Global Engagement, Orem Rotary Club, and the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, we have the chance to further our agenda to advocate for mountain women around the world, who are often among the most neglected.

The lack of adequate sustainable development in mountainous areas globally has left these populations vulnerable, ignored, and forgotten. Within these communities, women and girls are often denied education, subjected to abuse and violence, and forced into livelihoods they did not choose. The instability of these areas of the world has created a cycle of maltreatment and repression that threatens the wellbeing of women and girls. By learning about the importance of empowering mountain women, I am better prepared to assist and advocate for refugee women who are trying to rebuild their lives.

As a UVU student, I had the opportunity to learn more about mountain communities and their needs during my Post-Soviet Nations study abroad program in Russia and Kyrgyzstan in 2019. On this study abroad, I had the chance not only to learn through immersive cultural experiences, but also explore my academic interests while studying in Kyrgyzstan, where I learned about important initiatives taken by the United Nations to support mountain communities.

Kyrgyzstan, like many other mountainous countries, faces vulnerabilities related to fragile mountain ecosystems and social isolation, making sustainable development a priority for the UN in Kyrgyzstan. A significant milestone for the country was the International Year of Mountains in 2002, to bring global attention to the importance of sustainable mountain development. Since 2007, Utah Valley University, jointly with the International University of Kyrgyzstan, regularly hosts International Women of the Mountains Conferences. Using the SEL model, UVU also observes International Mountain Day annually, and I was among those students who hosted the event, met with experts in sustainable development and presented our own research. UVU students have demonstrated the effectiveness of student engaged learning to further our agenda of promoting sustainable mountain development and supporting mountain women through hosting events, publishing research papers, and participating in advocacy efforts.

Our contribution to CSW65 is an effort to share results and recommendations of WOM conferences among the participants of this highest UN gender forum. Mountain women have to be in the focus of CSW and the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.