

Review of the Roundtable for Joint Advocacy of the Mountain Women at the UN

The roundtable titled: “Joint advocacy of mountain women at the United Nations” was held by Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU) at the Fulton Library on October 2, 2017. The Roundtable was led by Dr. Baldomero Lago who is the CIO/Vice -Rector for the Global Engagement at UVU. Dr. Lago spoke of the many projects and groups affiliated with the UN currently underway at UVU. He spent most of his time discussing how he had recently returned from New York in order to bring the paperwork to the United Nations necessary to make during several weeks Utah Valley University an associate member of the United Nations Department of Public Information. He ended his remarks by stating that he believed the students at UVU were at the “right academic institution” for gaining experience and skills in the highest intergovernmental institutions in the world.



The next person to speak was Dr. Jed Shilling who serves on the Board of Trustees at the Mountain Institute (TMI) in Washington D.C.. TMI works at the UN as an NGO in a special

consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN. It is this background that provides his expertise in mountains and the issues facing the mountain peoples of the world. The beginning of his presentation focused on mountains themselves, and the different environments and resources of mountain regions. One of the things Dr. Shilling focused on was how the resources of mountains can affect the people and ecology of another country. He did spend special time also focusing on how the women who live in the mountains of the world are often the ones who have to work to provide for the home, the children and the elderly because the men leave to go find work at the bottom of the mountains.

The next speaker was Dr. Andrew Taber. Dr. Shilling focused most of his time on the environment and resources of mountain regions whereas Dr. Taber focused the majority of his time on the people of the mountains and women as well. Dr. Taber who is the Executive Director at the Mountain Institute talked about his work at the U.N. and how his organization works with the U.N. to reach Sustainable Development Goals, to raise the people of the mountains out of poverty through infrastructure development, and the development of the resources of the various mountain areas. Although, he focused on the mountain communities, Dr. Taber did spend some time focusing on the environment of the mountains. One of the things he mentioned was the development of roads for these mountain people. Dr. Taber felt that although the roads would bring benefit, they would have to be built in a way that didn't negatively impact the environment around them. While discussing the development of infrastructure in the mountains, Dr. Taber spoke of his desire to one day see people outside the United Nations protesting for securing the environment of the mountains the same way they fight and protest to maintain the Amazon and other forest regions. He also talked about how working with farmers in these regions, his organization has been able to give these farmers a yearly salary of \$30,000 dollars, putting them well into the middle class of their countries. He ended by speaking highly of UVU student's involvement in the U.N. activities and the importance of groups working together to solve these problems locally, regionally and globally in the future.

Dr. Rusty Butler spoke next, and spent most of his time describing the history of the Russian Academy of Natural Science (RANS) and its partnership with UVU. He spoke of RANS and UVU joint participation in the sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2016 and 2017, and how both of them were honored for their contribution to SDGs at an event hosted by Permanent Representatives to the UN from different

nations. He too spoke of his admiration of UVU and of student and faculty participation in the U.N. activities. He ended saying that he believed that “the engaged learning model at UVU should be used by every other institution in the nation.”

Ms. Wendy Jyang was the last speaker at the Roundtable. She talked about the importance of getting involved and learning what you are passionate about and using that to make a difference in the world. She realized early on that she could help the world through humanitarian services. To do this she started the Liahona International Services, which is a Beijing based institution which provides services for young people around the world.

My take away from the roundtable was first of all, that there are millions of people who live in third world conditions in mountains around the world. The second take away for me was that the U.N., other organizations and NGOs throughout the world are actively working to secure the future of these people living in the mountains. It is so great and important that students from our university are able through the student engaged learning initiative to be a part of those activities and make their own contribution in improving lives of mountain families and women around the world.

Jordan Ramos, UVU student