

Joint Advocacy of the Mountain Women and Agenda at the United Nations Roundtable

Utah Valley University (UVU) students hosted at UVU a round table of NGO's accredited under the United Nations titled "Joint advocacy of the mountain women and agenda at the United Nations" on October 2, 2017. This event was an eye opening event to all of those who attended as there were issues concerning mountainous environments discussed that many, me included, were not aware of. It seemed like the main purpose of the agenda was to raise awareness about the impact that mountains have on societies and cultures throughout the world.

It began with Dr. Baldomero Lago, who has played a major role in UVU becoming an Associate member of the United Nations Department of Public Information program as he currently manages UVU's global and intercultural academic initiatives. His presentation expounded on how UVU is one of the only schools to have such a relationship with the UN. He even mentioned that a UVU student led a UN meeting, which was the first time ever that a student from any school has achieved such a feat. He used to be a professor here and he acknowledged the importance of UVU's engaged learning program and how that has been a large factor for UVU-student led advocacy in this initiative. Following Lago's remarks was Dr. Jed Shilling who is a board member of the Blue Ridge Mountains and member of the Board of Trustees of The Mountain Institute. He explained how mountains play a large role for women and the people around them. Those issues range from water, to housing, to safety, even to economic development. This as I mentioned earlier was eye opening. There are so many issues that go into developing these mountain areas. It looks like the main agenda is women and helping them become reliable and useful agents in these areas. The UN has played a large role in the development of these areas and needs others to help in the awareness of how it works.

Dr. Andrew Taber then expressed his vision on the matter, which was similar to Dr. Shilling's remarks. As Dr. Taber is the executive director of the Mountain Institute. He received a doctorate from Oxford University and has been an advocate to improve lives of rural people for 25 years. He was also the deputy general of the Center for International Forestry Research. He expressed how the Mountain Institute is helping the lives of all those in mountainous areas, commonly reinforcing the ideas previously expressed by Dr. Jed Shilling. His conviction was identifiable to the audience.

The next presentation was given by Dr. Rusty Butler who was former faculty at UVU. He is currently the main representative of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences at the UN and is an advocate of getting UVU into the international scene. He expressed that working at UVU was an experience that helped him get on board with the mountain initiative and was something that he could stand behind. He mentioned that he is amazed at what the students are capable of, which more than he imagined and that through the student's eyes he has been able to accomplish more than otherwise. That is one of the main reasons they came to the university, to build up an advocacy that can build vision for the initiative.

The last presentation was shorter as there wasn't much time left and it was given by Ms. Wendy Jyang who is the President of Utah-China F.I.S.H.& D&C. She was inspirational. She expressed the importance that the listener has to act, which was a personal call to change and make a difference. She explained how we can be personal advocates to help people in those areas that are in need. She also shared her own personal story of how she met also President Holland from UVU and tied it to her appeal to us for our personal advocacy with our responsibilities to schooling. That is what propelled her into being an inspiration to provide humanitarian service to many poor people in China. It was a great way to end it off seeing as that was their goal to build awareness and develop action.

There is a great work to be done in all areas as development and sustained living can only be achieved through those who want to make a difference. Those who presented came from all over and took their time to talk and expound such an important topic which emphasizes it that much more. It starts first of all with us, in the community. We can develop the need for change within ourselves and then take that to others around the world. Organizations like the UN are doing a great job of creating programs like this and many others to develop and make the world the best place that it can be.

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