

Learning about Uzbekistan from top envoy to the UN

. On February 5, 2018, I had the privilege to co-host the visit of Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations, His Excellency, Bakhtiyor Ibragimov to Utah Valley University (UVU). I was there as a member of UVU Foreign Affairs club. This was a unique opportunity for me to learn about foreign affairs priorities of Uzbekistan along with being able to ask questions directly to the Ambassador Ibragimov. I also had the privilege of being in the luncheon with the Ambassador of Uzbekistan alongside with his fellow diplomat who had accompanied him. I was told that this was part of UVU established tradition that allows students to per take at breakfasts and lunches with foreign dignitaries as a way to hopefully help students gain experiences and build personal relationships with the visiting dignitaries.

During lunch I got to learn about his background of how he came to be on the top envoy of his country. He had a unique situation of living in Uzbekistan when it was still part the Soviet Union prior to it being broken up into several countries as it is today. He had the uncommon perspective of being part of the Soviet system to then also being in Uzbekistan when the state declared its independence in 1991. The most interesting part about his talk was when I and other students were able to ask the Ambassador how breaking up of the Soviet Union impacted Uzbekistan and what it meant for Uzbekistan as well. This was interesting to hear because learning about how states go from communist regimes to democratic systems is something we learn as students from textbook, but it is completely different when you hear it from someone who has gone through it. The part that I found most interesting for me personally was that the country is 90% Muslim and that Uzbekistan had such an open and very tolerant position on other religions present in the country different from Islam.

After lunch, the Ambassador Ibragimov gave a lecture on the foreign policy priorities of his country. The topics he talked about included environmental issues, trade development in Central Asia along with new initiatives Uzbekistan is trying with their close neighbor Afghanistan. The initiatives include more friendly gestures like reopening Uzbekistan presence in Afghanistan and opening regular air flight routes within the two countries.

Lastly, it was a great opportunity to be part of such an engaged learning opportunity and to raise an awareness of the visiting dignitary of the contribution from me and our student community to the United Nations agenda of global significance. It was wonderful to learn of Uzbekistan and its people through their own top envoy to the United Nations. I was humble to have met the Ambassador and learned so much from him and of his country.

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