

UIMF focuses on mountains during the first day at HLPF 2018

Like everyone else's trip in our Utah Valley University (UVU) delegation to the 2018 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development, mine also started with a plane ride. Unfortunately, I couldn't fly with the rest of the group because of scheduling conflicts, so instead I took the red-eye from Salt Lake City to Newark airport on Sunday, July 15, 2018 at 11:55 pm. Although this was less practical as the schedule for the other student I was still able to arrive at the Newark airport without a hitch on Monday, July 16, 2018 at 6:00 am. With direction given by Sam Elzinga and Andrew Jensen, my peers who had already arrived, I was able to find the bus and make my way to Grand Central Station.

Once I had arrived at the middle of the city I was able to drop my luggage off and get ready for the rest of the day. The logistics schedule that I had to follow for the previous 12 hours was difficult, but I was able to become a little more acquainted with what it means to be part of the United Nations. Preparing for the trip has caused stress to many of the students in the UIMF for several weeks now, but the excitement to be in New York has eclipsed the difficulties that we have faced.

The first order of business, once I was ready, was to get the UN grounds pass for the week of activities at HLPF. Something that I did not expect was the heat and the humidity in New York, and when I began waiting in line with the rest of the visiting delegations from around the world outside the UN office is when I began to really feel the climate differences. Although this experience was a little unexpected at first, I was able to meet some new people that were waiting in line with me. One was a father and a son originally from India, now living in New Jersey, who were here as part of the Solar Cookers International who's goal is to spread thermal cooking technology to people all over the world. Another man that I met was a journalist from Sri Lanka with ties to organizations who are also promoting mountain communities in those areas. I was able to give him my business card before we parted, and the opportunity to network was a great one.

After having received my UN grounds pass I was able to meet up with the rest of the group, and then visit the office of UN official Ms. Eleonora Kulaijan, where we were able to get our tickets to the HLPF general discussion event on Thursday, July 19, 2018 where we will be presenting our oral statement. Following that and a minor break in the café, three of us were able to attend a side event relating to the Stop the Drug War campaign, with a focus on the Philippine island of

Mindanao. This event was interesting, especially since I had recently participated in a group project relating to one of the major cities on the island, Iligan City, located on the northeast coast.



UIMF members after the meeting with Mr. Mastrojeni (second from the right) and Mr. Grussu (first from the right)

What was more exciting than this event, was the opportunity to meet with Mr. Grammenos Mastrojeni, a member of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the chair of the Mountain Partnership Steering Committee, and Mr. Giorgio Grussu, representative of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat.

Meeting with both members of the Mountain Partnership was an exhilarating experience. We were able to discuss each other's goals and means to accomplish the goals relating to the sustainable development goals, and how they relate to mountain environments. One of the things that struck me and gave me the desire to emphasize the importance of the mountains even more is when Mr. Mastrojeni said that changes in mountain environments could be detrimental to every other part of

the world. During the meeting we were also able to discuss the Engaged Learning Model, implemented in some of the classrooms at Utah Valley University.



UIMF members during the side event Mountains and the 2030 Agenda

To close the end of day one, members of the UVU delegation and I were able to attend the side event dedicated to the Sustainable Mountain Development, titled *Mountains and the 2030 Agenda* and hosted by the government of Andorra under the initiative of the MP. The panel was chaired previously mentioned Mr. Grammenos Mastreojeni, and included ambassadors and representatives from Andorra Silva Calvo Armengol, Minister of Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability, from Argentina, Mr. Alejandro Verdier, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, from Chile, Mr. Jorge Iglesias, Deputy Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations, from Switzerland, Mr. Christoph I. Long, Adviser, Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation (SDC), also the General Manager of the UNDPI Yoko Watanabe, and the Assistant Director General of the FAO, Rene Castro. The main theme of the meeting with these representatives was “Why Mountains Matter” and the framework of action in sustainable mountain development and how the actions that are taken in these types of environments could impact more than just those that live in the mountains, but also those in every other type of environment and climate.

This event was wonderful to attend and finish of my first day, here at the UN.

Damon Ashcraft, Vice President, Sustainable Mountain Development Club