

## Director of Outreach Division for the UN DPI Speaks about Multilateralism and the SDGs at UVU



**(L to R): Hagen Isaacson and Mr. Maher Nasser**

On November 28, 2018, the Office for Global Engagement at Utah Valley University (UVU) hosted Mr. Maher Nasser, the Director of Outreach Division for the Department of Public Information at the United Nations (UN). Mr. Nasser was in Utah for a press conference with Salt Lake City Mayor Jackie Biskupski to announce Salt Lake as the location for the NGO UN Conference in August 2019. UVU capitalized on this opportunity and invited Mr. Nasser to present at UVU. Mr. Nasser's talk centered around multilateralism and its use in advocating for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This was a great opportunity for faculty and students at UVU to learn how it is the entire world's job to advocate for SDGs. It also allowed members of Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU to learn ways to advocate for the mountain agenda on a global scale.

The first area Mr. Nasser addressed was the impact that multilateralism has on the entire nation. He discussed how everyday things like weather and flights are affected by the interaction and coordination of states around the world. He also touched on the UN's ability to work with many countries to help with international issues. He stated that 68.5 million people are displaced in the world that are being assisted by the UN. The UN organization such as UNICEF also uses

multilateralism to address other problems by vaccinating 45% of the children around the world. The UN is trying to work together to obtain results and is making progress. Regardless of what the media says about distrust and infighting, the UN passes 80% of resolutions by consensus. Multilateralism is very important for the UN to help the world and pass meaningful resolutions.

He also addressed the positive impact that multilateralism has on SDG advocacy and implementation. He used the issue of climate change very frequently to express this. Implementing SDGs is directly related to the impact of climate change, as it is an attempt to mitigate the effects as much as possible. This has to be done collectively and can't be accomplished by a single state. That is one of the reasons for the UN NGO conference in August that is happening in Salt Lake. It provides a platform for nations to work together on the very important issue of climate change along with other SDG related problems. However, even though these SDGs were made by the UN and are ultimately placed on states' shoulders, Mr. Nasser made the excellent point that these goals are everybody's. They impact everyone and require cooperation from more than just political leaders. One group that Mr. Nasser specifically called on was the youth. The youth makes up a huge portion of the population and is the future of this planet. It is on us to do what the correct things now in order to prepare for our future. This was very inspiring especially for someone like me who is involved with the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) and advocates for SDGs. It is critical that the young people of this planet push for issues that our leaders won't address on their own. Mountain communities is a perfect example of this as they are among the poorest people in the world and are constantly ignored by the international community. Mr. Nasser provided a great speech on the need for the youth to get involved in advocating for the SDGs and also the need for multilateralism to achieve these goals.

***Hagen Isaacson, Treasurer and Director of Service, UIMF***