

Learning Why Sustainable Development Goals and Multilateralism Matter With Mr. Maher Nasser



Megan Davis and Mr. Maher Nasser after the presentation

On Wednesday, November 30th, 2018, the Office of Global Engagement at Utah Valley University (UVU) hosted Mr. Maher Nasser, Director of Outreach Division for the Department of Public Information at the United Nations (U.N.). Mr. Nasser, a past refugee from Palestine and 30+ year employee at the U.N., visited UVU campus to talk about why multilateralism matters and why we should care about the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In his presentation, Mr. Maher Nasser stated that, "Every aspect of our lives is touched by at least one branch of the United Nations." He then went on to give a few

examples of how the U.N. does impact our everyday lives such as, vaccinations, flights/airplanes, and the weather app for a few. Nearly 45% of the world's children are provided vaccinations with the support of UNICEF. Human rights are key to the work of the U.N., so Nasser definitely made sure to really expound on and emphasize that point. The past Palestinian citizen told the story of how he was previously a refugee and a branch of the U.N. reached out to him to get him back on his feet. Currently, there are nearly 68.5 million displaced people or refugees in the world and the humanitarian crisis funding has jumped from \$5 billion in 2005 to \$24 billion now. Every day, branches of the United Nations and NGOs are all working to continue reaching out to refugees, helping out in humanitarian crises, and creating development plans for a sustainable global future.

Why does multilateralism matter one might ask? Mr. Maher Nasser answered just that in his UVU presentation. In international relations, multilateralism is defined as an alliance of multiple countries pursuing a common goal. Borders are slowly becoming nonexistent for many worldly problems we are currently dealing with. Stated by Maher himself, "Organized crime and criminals don't know borders and neither do diseases and viruses." All the way from the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Africa to terrorism and different border patrols working together to find a solution, multilateralism touches every corner of this planet and affects every soul living on this planet in one way or another.

Another popularly asked question answered in this presentation was, why should we care about SDGs? To put it lightly, SDGs aren't the UN's goals, they're our goals. Nasser went on to say that while creating the 17 SDGs, the UN reached out the people and citizens of the world to get their input, mainly youth (age ranges from 18-27). Our

interest in promoting SDGs isn't a political agenda, it's the stake of our global future. With the help of all the different branches of the UN and local NGOs, we can all work together to achieve the 2030 sustainable future goal.

One thing Mr. Maher Nasser said during his UVU presentation was very prominent and has stuck with me ever since. He stated, "Do not wait to be invite to sit at the table, take your place at the table." As a political science major at UVU and a member of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, that simple statement has inspired me as I am attempting to network and establish myself for a future career. I love being a UIMF member for all of the opportunities we are given every day to interact with high level political figures and help promote the UN's sustainability goals.

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