

Russian DPR Visits UVU, Discusses SDGs with Students



On April 5th, 2019, members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU), helped co-host Mr. Dmitry Polyanskiy, First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. This is one of the first times UIMF has had the opportunity to host someone who sits so regularly on the security council at the United Nations, and adding to this, was an excellent opportunity to hear from a representative of one of the most powerful countries on earth. Mr. Polyanskiy provided UIMF students insight into Russia's view on the sustainable development goals, their implementation, and how UIMF can better advocate for mountain women.

Russia is traditional viewed as a rival of the United States and an adversary on the global stage, so it was interesting to hear from a representative of the country. Being a diplomat, Mr. Polyanskiy was very careful with his words all throughout the presentation and made sure not too intentionally start any confrontations with students. Adding to this, I found that students were largely respectful of Mr. Polyanskiy and his views, which was very nice to see. It reminded me that at the end of the day, we do not dislike each other as much as we think.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Mr. Polyanskiy's presentation was on Russia's view of the Sustainable Development Goals. He remarked how Russia does not prioritize one SDG over another and that they are all equally important. He added that emphasizing one over another will lead to a disproportionate implementation, which will leave some goals unachieved. He also added that Russia hoped all the goals were properly implemented so there would not be hearings in 2030 on why the goals were not reached, as that would be unproductive. During our group meeting with

Mr. Polyanskiy after his presentation, we talked largely about the United Nations and how much of a bureaucracy it is. Mr. Polyanskiy provided some great insight into getting language about mountain women into documents, but at the end of the day that is not the purpose of enacting change. Change happens at the local level, and one of the first things we need to start doing according to Mr. Polyanskiy is to start engaging groups all around the world in our efforts. This insight was very informative, and we were very appreciative to hear his thoughts.



Overall, the meeting and presentation was a great success. We had many students, like Megan Davis, Viktoriia Bahrii, Joseph Lloyd, Hannah Beiker, Hailee Hodgson, and William Gum attend, along with other students from the study abroad that is going to Moscow and Kyrgyzstan. Everyone was engaged and played a key role in UIMF's time with the Ambassador Polyanskiy. I hope we can continue to set the tone with the quality of the work we are doing.

Samuel Elzinga, President, Utah International Mountain Forum