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to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, and Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Mountain women and girls must be in the focus of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

We urge the sixty fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure sustainable development for families, women and girls who live in mountain areas of the world. The Commission has as a priority theme the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The model that we developed with our collaborative partners at Utah Valley University through the Utah International Mountain Forum for inclusive student-engaged learning, advocates for mountain communities. It can be adopted by academic institutions worldwide, especially in mountain regions. This model can provide students with skills similar to those described below, and bring genuine change to mountain communities, families, women and girls worldwide by jointly advocating for the implementation of mountain targets. Also, this model demonstrates the ability of students, including non-traditional learners to contribute broad-range initiatives to the implementation of the three mountain targets on local, national and international levels.

Although three mountain targets have been designated among the Sustainable Development Goals to address the place of mountain communities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, these communities still remain among the poorest and most neglected in the world. A study conducted in 2015 by the Food and Agriculture Organization found that 39 per cent of developing countries' mountain populations are vulnerable to food insecurity—or roughly 329 million people. Modern challenges, such as climate change and migration, make their situation even worse.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action does not specifically mention mountain women and girls. However, it includes actions critical to empower such vulnerable groups, in particular through education. As a result, those actions also ensure the success of the advocacy of mountain targets' implementation by student members of the Utah International Mountain Forum. For example, sub-chapter 4-60, paragraph (a) urges the inclusion of academic institutions and others in aiding rural and indigenous women; sub-chapter 4-82 speaks of the creation of non-formal, vocational, and gender-specific curricula for girls and women in the educational system, especially nontraditional women; sub-chapter 4-258, paragraph (b) subpart (ii) asks for the development of methodologies on the impact on women of environmental and natural resource degradation, stemming from issues such as global warming and natural disasters; and sub-chapter 4-88, paragraph (c) mentions the creation of flexible education, training and retraining programs for life-long learning that facilitate the transition between women's activities at all stages of their lives.

As our collaborative partner the Utah International Mountain Forum serves as a core of the co-curricular student engaged learning model developed at Utah Valley University since 2011. Utah Valley University is the largest academic institution in the state of Utah currently enrolling almost 42,000 students. Over 30 percent of the student body are non-traditional learners who, in addition to their education, must work full- or part-time in support of a spouse or family, and can range between 25- to 75-years of age. Established as a vocational training school in 1941, Utah Valley University today addresses the needs of local communities along the Wasatch mountain range through a dual mission as a community college, combined with the rigor and seriousness of a four-year teaching institution.

The model collaboratively developed at the school inclusively involves students across campus, including nontraditional learners with local community stakeholders

in implementation of mountain targets in the mountainous State of Utah and globally. It consists of four parts:

- 1) Students are given a problem to solve (which is the advocacy of the UN mountain targets)
- 2) students must work together as a group to learn how to solve the problem
- 3) faculty and stakeholders serve them as mentors, and
- 4) students are responsible for their own learning during the process of solving a problem.

As part of the advocacy campaign, students learn and share experiences about major achievements and challenges in sustainable development in Utah with mountain communities elsewhere. In addition, they encourage peers and local communities to contribute to sustaining the livelihoods of mountain communities globally.

The model allows one generation of students to gain professional skills, opportunities for networking, exchanging best practices, and international recognition through implementing mountain targets at local, national and global levels. Under the model, students collaborate with all stakeholders in the implementation of a broad range of initiatives, for example, they raise funds for advocacy campaigns, manage logistics, develop agendas, reach out to United Nations officials, diplomats, representatives of non-governmental organizations, experts, scholars, write statements, host parallel and side events, and publish the results of their activities.

During 2013-2015, through this model, students advocated for the adoption of mountain targets at sessions of the United Nations Open Working Groups on Sustainable Development Goals: Target 6.6, by 2030, to protect and restore water related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes; target 15.1, by 2030, to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements, and; target 15.4, by 2030, to ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.

The model allowed coalition members for the first time to successfully host on their own the fourth International Women of the Mountains conference on October 7-9, 2015. The conference was held under the umbrella of the United Nations Mountain Partnership at Utah Valley University campus in Orem, Utah. The organizing committee of the conference was comprised of more than 70 students, including nontraditional learners, from Utah Valley University, Brigham Young University and the University of Utah.

The United Nations Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/71/256](#) of July 29, 2016 highlighted the students' advocacy of gender agendas by hosting the conference and adopting the outcome document, which contained the following observations:

- (a) Sustainable Development Goal 5 could be achieved through strong support for improving women's rights and welfare, including women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- (b) successful implementation of target 6.6 could be achieved by supporting the vital role that women play in the protection of the environment and water sources, particularly as custodians of traditional knowledge that builds resilience and allows for adaptation to climate change, and

(c) with respect to target 15.1, women playing a critical role in joint planning as promoters of innovation, development and cooperation for the common benefit.

Since 2016, as our collaborative partner the Utah International Mountain Forum has advocated for the implementation of mountain targets at several forums of the United Nations Economic and Social Council on sustainable development, including the fifty second session of the Commission on Social Development; the sixty second and sixty third sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, and; the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. During these forums, students, including nontraditional students, prepared written statements and hosted parallel and side events. Students also learned how to work with Member States in order to include language about the mountain targets and communities in the final documents of those forums.

Students were able to include language about mountain communities for the first time in the final document of the sixty eighth United Nations Civil Society Conference, held in Salt Lake City, Utah on August 26-28, 2019. The Preamble of the Conference's Outcome Document stated the importance of the interdependence of rural and urban prosperity, as well as the need to address the specific conditions of mountainous areas and small island developing states. To secure the adoption of the necessary language in the Outcome document, students worked together with officials from the United Nations Department of Global Communications, United Nations Global Compact, mountain nations such as the Kyrgyz Republic, both of the collaborative non-governmental organizations, and academic partners such as the Global University System and Project Work Groups. At the conference, students also hosted a workshop and an exhibition about the student engaged learning model to advocate for mountain women and targets at the United Nations.

During the sixty fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, our delegation will be comprised of students from Utah Valley University, Brigham Young University, and Utah State University. Delegation members will report their experiences in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality in Utah and elsewhere in interaction with Sustainable Development Goal 2 on food security, Sustainable Development Goal 13 on climate action, Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water, Sustainable Development Goal 7 on energy, Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education, and Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and waste management. It will also provide them an opportunity to conduct the advocacy campaign jointly with mountainous nations accredited to the United Nations. They could both learn and share experiences in mountain targets implementation with the newly created Group of Friends of Mountainous Countries: Afghanistan, Andorra, Austria, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, Canada, Georgia, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Morocco, Nepal, Switzerland, Tajikistan and Turkey.

The model implements Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality in interaction with target 4.7 about ensuring that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

As one of the steps, that is, commemorating the twenty fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we urge in particular mountainous Member States to report in national reviews during the sixty fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women about their actions to bring mountain communities, families and women in the focus of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.