

# Handling Protocol for the Women of the Mountains Conference

NOVEMBER 10, 2015 EDITOR

When I first decided to work with the Fourth International Women of the Mountains conference (WOMC), I never could have anticipated the amazing opportunity and experience that waited for me. I had recently transferred back to Utah Valley University (UVU), and while walking to class one afternoon, I saw a poster advertising the opportunity to work with the organizing committee to help prepare and host the conference at UVU campus on October 7-9, 2015. The preparations had been going on for the past year, so I joined the team a bit later than most. However, the four months leading up to the conference that I helped were some of the most crucial.

I first spoke with Tony Medina, the VP of Logistics and Protocol, and Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, the Advisor for the conference, who suggested, based on my interests in working with the US State Department, that I help with the protocol of the conference. I was tasked to be the Head of Protocol and to supervise the work of twelve students, responsible for particular VIP guests from the United States and abroad; an assignment I am very grateful for and humbled they would trust me with.

It became my responsibility to follow up on invitations that had already been sent, as well as to prepare and send additional invitations to federal officials and foreign diplomats, accredited to the United Nations, to the United States, and experts from overseas. Here, I must also express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Rusty Butler, Associate VP for International Affairs and Diplomacy at UVU, who has established a great tradition of bringing Ambassadors of different countries to the United Nations and to the United States in order to make presentations before UVU faculty and students regarding their nations. He is also the focal point (coordinator) for the Mountain Partnership (MP) under the F.A.O-U.N. at UVU: he coordinates programs with a focus on the sustainable mountain development (SMD) agenda of the United Nations since 2006 when UVU joined the MP.

Dr. Butler, and his deputy Amy Barnett, contributed to the WOMC by covering trips for some of the VIP guests and by providing us (students) with opportunities to do the rest of the job: to host the VIP guests from the moment of their arrival to Salt Lake City airport until their departure back home after the end of the conference.

I first worked with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkmenistan to the United States, H.E., Dr. Meret Orazov, who sent a quick response that he would be able to attend and would be willing to present at the conference. Ambassador Orazov has participated in the WOMCs since 2007. It was a great experience to work with the envoy from Turkmenistan and listen to his presentation on his country and the initiatives they are

currently undertaking to further sustainable development for women and children. Ambassador Orazov was very supportive of all of the student's efforts and initiatives.

I also contacted Ms. Mihaela Stamate, assistant to the chief of the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations to invite Ambassador Simona-Mirela Miculescu, to attend the conference. Romania has been working hard at the United Nations to further the SMD agenda, particularly for women and children, and has even coordinated the efforts of several mountain nations in order to get mountain indicators to be included among sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations during general discussions in 2013-2014.

When Mihaela informed me that Ambassador Miculescu finished her tenure and went back to Romania, I was able to prepare and send an invitation letter from the organizing committee to the newly appointed Romanian envoy to the United Nations, His Excellency Dr. Ion Jinga and his wife Daniella Jinga. Ambassador Jinga excitedly accepted the invitation. The Romanian envoy was a cheerful person, encouraging students and contributing to the success of the conference both during the gathering and after the conference. The Ambassador emphasized the commitment of Romania to the promotion of gender equality in his excellent presentation during conference and in his Op-Ed, "[Women Empowerment: A Religion of the 21st Century](#)" published in the Huffington Post.



***Parker Nielsen with Ambassador of Romania, H.E. Dr. Ion Jinga***

I also worked with embassies of several other mountain countries accredited to the United Nations including Lesotho, Argentina, Nepal, Bhutan, and Azerbaijan to invite their top envoys to attend the conference. Of all the additional embassies I contacted, only Ambassador Kelebene Maope of Lesotho responded and let me know that he regrettably wouldn't be able to attend as did Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the United States, H.E. Elin Suleymanov. The others never responded to our invitations or our attempts at following up. It was a great experience developing contacts and working with embassies and international dignitaries regardless of whether or not all of the invited guests responded.

Special attention was given to providing protocol and logistics to the representative of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS) based in Rome, Italy which was one of the main

institutions providing support to our conference. The Secretariat decided to send to UVU Mia Rowan, a communication specialist at the MPS, as their representative. Mia had the responsibility to conduct several meetings with the MP members, present on the current projects the MP is undertaking, and oversee the plenary session where the final draft document to be presented to the United Nations had to be discussed. She worked hard to help the students accomplish these important tasks and ensured the conference was a success. It was a special pleasure for me to work so close with her and learn many lessons in networking, presenting, and protocol which I will use in my future professional life.



***(L to R) Mia Rowan and Parker Nielsen***

I gained important experience from my interaction with another very important organization: UNWomen. During the second Women of the Mountains Conference in 2011 the head of the UNWomen, the Honorable Michelle Bachelet, sent to participants of the conference a letter with greetings. This time, students hoped to get UNWomen's participation at the conference and share with them the success of promoting the United Nations gender agenda in North America as the future leaders in the implementation of the just adopted post-2015-agenda of the United Nations. The organizing committee had sent several invitations to the UNWomen one year prior the event, offering even to cover the expenses of the UNWomen representative if the office decided to send someone to the conference.

I worked very hard to get representation from UNWomen to the conference, but ultimately gave up after several months. I finally heard the day before the conference that they would not be able to provide representation. I know that the UNWomen were busy with courting China to co-host the "Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action," one week prior our conference. Probably due to that reason they didn't send us any letter with official greetings as well. We were, however, able to get participation from the UNWomen chapter in Utah. We hope that for future conferences representatives from UNWomen in New York will be able to contribute to the success of the conference.

Additionally, I worked with several high level dignitaries from the United States including Irene Marr, the Senior Policy Advisor for Europe and Central Asia in the U.S. Secretary of

State's Office for Global Women's Issues, and had the pleasure of introducing her prior to her presentation during the conference. She was incredibly helpful and participated in almost every panel and every session of the conference. She informed us of how her office and the State Department make all efforts to ensure that women's issues are addressed at the highest level possible. As I have intentions to work for the State Department, I had the opportunity to ask her questions about how best to prepare myself and what working for the State Department is like. She was very encouraging and helpful. I am grateful to have met her and for all her help with the conference.



***(L to R): Yankila Sherpa, from Nepal, Parker Nielsen, and Irene Marr, State Department***

In addition to working with international VIP-guests and ambassadors, I had the opportunity to work with other international dignitaries by sending them official invitations to the conference, helping prepare travel plans and itineraries, and most importantly working with US embassies in their areas to help get visas approved in order for them to attend. I coordinated efforts of our team to arrange trips to Orem, UT for Diana Lucia Chaman Salas, from Peru, Yunita Kopjanski from Indonesia, Bernice Frimpong Ankrah from Ghana, Gulshan Tynystanova and Mira Attokurova from Kyrgyzstan, Manzura Makhkamova from Tajikistan, and Yankila Sherpa from Nepal among others. Yankila is the former Minister of Tourism of Nepal and works hard to further sustainability and development for women and children in her country.

After working with visa issues, international guests, dignitaries, and US representatives I worked to put together a team of students that would be responsible for protocol during the conference. Students volunteered to help pick up people from the airport, escort our guests, and be on hand to help with any of the various issues that come up during a conference of this size. Working with the student's various interests and availability, I paired each student with a guest and prepared a packet that included itineraries, hotel information, conference schedules, and the appropriate protocol for greeting and working with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

I paired Matt Murdoch and his wife Emily with Ambassador Jinga and His wife. Matt and Emily did an excellent job accompanying them and received the highest praise from the Ambassador for his efforts. Johnny Warren agreed to work with Irene Marr from the State Department and went above and beyond what was asked of him. Samantha Hawkins and Andrew Brown worked together with Yankila Sherpa from Nepal, picking her up at the

airport and making sure that her every need was met. Trevor Williams escorted Mia Rowan from the MPS and worked hard to help her accomplish all her goals and tasks she had planned during the conference. Christian Jensen worked with Yunita Kopjanski from Indonesia and received high praise for helping Yunita with everything she needed during the conference.

Andre Jones, Ryan Belliston and Andrei Pylnikov accompanied Gulshan Tynystanova and Mira Attokurova from Kyrgyzstan. Andre Jones, who speaks Russian and Andrei Pylnikov, who is from Russia helped translate for Gulshan and Mira during the conference. Ryan demonstrated an excellent flexibility as he switched from helping one VIP-guest to another. Jason Linde accompanied Ambassador of Turkmenistan, H.E. Dr. Meret Orazov and made sure that the Ambassador's stay in Utah was pleasant all while maintaining school, work, and family life. Michael Scott Montrose provided protocol to Vicki Fenwick-Judy from the Mountain Institute. Michael met every need of Vicki and the conference. When met with an issue, he approached it head on and worked to make sure it was taken care of.

Finally, Vinicius "Vinny" Pacheco accompanied Alexey Semyonov, the President of the Andrei Sakharov Foundation. Alexey had limited time so after giving his presentation, he had to leave to attend to matters with work. Vinicius still worked tirelessly to help in every way with the conference. He was on call for everything I or anyone else needed at any given time and went above and beyond to make sure it was taken care of. Travis Webb, Drew Swainston and Chase Marstella had been asked to provide protocol to people who weren't able to make it, however in the end, they all still worked very hard to help in every way possible during the conference. Each and everyone deserves the highest praise possible for their efforts.

The conference was a great success due to the efforts of many students and faculty that made it possible. A special role was played by Dr. David Connelly, Chair of the History and Political Science Department, who always ensures that students in the department have the opportunities and resources they need to succeed globally in their chosen fields. The department provided a special office to the organizing committee with all equipment and logistics necessary for the conference. Students continue to use it as a headquarters for the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at UVU.

Dr. Connelly provided funds to cover certain expenses during the conference, helped to raise additional financial resources when it was necessary, and in addition made an almost unlimited in-kind contribution from the department including: printing, copying agendas, materials and sending them where it was necessary. Dr. Connelly has supported the SMD promotion since the time he arrived at UVU, and has his own interest as a scholar in sustainability, and rural development.

Kimberly Williamson, Dr. Connelly's administrative assistant, was also instrumental in the success of the conference. Her contributions include: printing and preparing all the necessary documents, providing support and help to students on the organizing committee for all the scheduling, contacting, reimbursing and, parking. She advised our students how to

make the reservations for our VIP guests and coordinated travel to and from the airport for the guests that didn't have rides. Additionally, she helped with reimbursements for all of our VIP guests and our students who traveled to and from the airport to pick them up. And, all of this was done in addition to handling the department's regular routine and scheduled activities for which she is responsible.

PERMANENT MISSION OF  
ROMANIA  
to the United Nations



MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA  
ROUMANIE  
auprès des Nations Unies

*The Ambassador*

*New York, 13 October 2015*

*Dear Mr. Nielsen, Dear Parker,*

*I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank you for inviting me to the Utah Valley University with the occasion of the Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference.*

*It was an honor for me to be among the speakers of this event and to participate in the fruitful subsequent discussions. The ideas exchanged during the Fourth International Women of the Mountains (IWM) conference are a good starting point for further initiatives in this respect on a global scale.*

*I would also like to reiterate Romania's commitment regarding the timely resolution of all gender-related issues and of a complete empowerment of women in our society on a global scale.*

*The policies adopted by Romania within the HeForShe framework are witnessing our desire to correct any gender-related disequilibrium and to continue our way towards full gender equality.*

*This initiative was not only a celebration of the progresses achieved in this field, but also an occasion for professionals and experts to cooperate for the improvement of the global situation.*

*I hope this Event it was fruitful and successful for all participants, as it was for me.*

*Please accept, dear Mr. Nielsen, the assurances of my highest consideration.*

*with best wishes,*

*Dr. Ion Jinga*

*Mr. Parker Nielsen  
Head of Protocol  
Organizing Committee  
The Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference  
Utah International Mountain Forum*

***Thank you letter from Ambassador of Romania  
to the United Nations, Dr. Ion Jinga***

Baktybek Abdrysaev, a lecturer at UVU and former Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan, provided opportunities for students to participate in events on the international level and to work hard to make sure they are recognized for their efforts. He refers to them not as students, but as colleagues and trusts them with high levels responsibility. He works hard to teach his students and ensures they are prepared for the future. Tony Medina, the VP of Logistics and Protocol, demonstrated to us many new skills which we all admire. He worked nonstop

during the entire conference, as well as the time leading up to the conference. He prepared everything from the rooms we would need, to the food we would eat and so much more all while going to class and dealing with normal family responsibilities. His friendly and encouraging attitude draws people to him, and he in turn helps them to accomplish great things.

Deann Torsak, the Executive Secretary of the conference, is an amazing force capable of accomplishing impossible feats. She was able to manage every aspect of the conference from the panels, to the scheduling, to contacting and working with everyone involved all while attending class and dealing with family life. I learned many things from the conference and met many wonderful people. It was a difficult and stressful experience, but one of the most fulfilling and rewarding experiences I have ever had. Thanks to my involvement in the conference and its activities, I am a better person and I am more prepared to face the challenges of the world.

The Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference isn't the last step. There is much more to be done and much more work that must happen in order to promote the sustainable development of mountainous regions. Women and children around the world suffer for many reasons, but by working together across international borders, solutions can be found. That was the purpose of the conference and thanks to everyone involved, we have taken a large step in the right direction.

***Parker Nielsen, Head of Protocol, 2015 WOMC organizing committee***  
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