

## **Impact of the Mountain Targets and SDGs on National Security**

I participated in a very important meeting at Utah Valley University (UVU) alongside students with Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Ambassador Macharia Kamau on February 9, 2017. Ambassador Kamau made a presentation at UVU on the United Nations Post 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our distinguished guest, who was one of the leaders of the UN team that researched and created the Post 2015 SDGs, spoke about the history of the SDGs and the impact they may have.



*UIMF members meet Ambassador Macharia Kamau*

Before his major presentation Ambassador Kamau met with members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, who have promoted the sustainable development agenda (SMD) of the United Nations in the State of Utah and North America since 2011. Leaders of the coalition reported to the VIP guest, that the UN would benefit from adopting specialized SDGs for mountain regions. Mountain regions have much to offer to the world such as supply of water, agricultural and cultural development among others. However due to lack of development, many mountain regions still face the hurdles of extreme poverty, gender inequality, armed conflicts, economic underdevelopment, and in some cases political underdevelopment. However the benefits from paying special attention to SMD as part of the SDGs are very great.

As a student of national security I must emphasize that many security threats faced by the United States and states among the international community are symptoms of political and/or economic problems in underdeveloped, failing, and failed states and unfortunately, many mountain nations are at the end of that list. By sustainably developing mountain regions around the world we can reduce security threats faced by the United States and the international community.

Ambassador Kamau's presentation on sustainable development was very hopeful and inspiring. In national security it is not uncommon for pessimistic views of the international community to take hold as realism is often the dominant political theory. When our distinguished guest spoke, he took a liberal approach to the international community and there was a lot of optimism in his views of the future. Ambassador Kamau spoke about the importance of establishing institutions in the international community and how these institutions would help ensure that SDGs would be met and that progress could not be stopped. To support his argument that progress towards sustainable development has been consistent Ambassador Kamau compared global statistics from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century on things such as economic development, literacy rates etc. showing that economic development, literacy, etc. has significantly increased. Hearing Ambassador Kamau's presentation has given me hope, optimism, and determination to continue to build up SMD in many parts of the mountain world.

In my time since attending UVU I have had the opportunity to take many classes from Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev and as a result I have been able to become actively involved in SMD at UVU through the UIMF. A year and a half ago I had the opportunity to be involved with the 2015 international "Women of the Mountains" conference held at UVU. This conference highlighted SMD and the contributions women have made in this area. During preparations for the conference I was able to work in protocol and help ensure that everything was in place for a successful conference. More recently I have had the opportunity to research the way 19<sup>th</sup> century Mormons handled security when they settled Utah so that mountain regions can work to improve their own security. Going forward I hope to remain actively involved in SMD so that I can have a positive impact on the lives of others and bring the international community closer together.

*Mark Driggs, Liaison for the National Security Club with Utah International Mountain Forum*