

UIMF HLPF 2018 delegates learn about Tajikistan's water decade initiative



(L to R) Andrew Jensen, Damon Ashcraft, H.E. Mr. Mahmamin Mahmaminov, Samuel Elzinga, and Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev before HLPF session

On July 17th at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, delegates from the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of clubs at Utah Valley University, were able to meet with His Excellency Mr. Mahmamin Mahmaminov, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations (UN). Ambassador Mahmaminov was chairing the voluntary national reviews session at HLPF the morning of the 17th, so we were only able to meet for a few minutes before he had to go in and run the voluntary national reviews. Meeting with Mr. Mahmaminov on Tuesday, though albeit brief, was a great experience, and he even invited us to a side event which Permanent Mission of Tajikistan to the UN was hosting on Thursday, July 19, 2018, at the time in between the general debates sessions with our participation. Thanks to the advantages of the UN system, I was able to see Ambassador Mahmaminov on

Thursday, July 19, 2018 at his side event as well as one other time during the side event on SDGs implementation in Central Asia hosted by the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the UN on July 18th at the HLPF.

On Wednesday, July 18th, I attended the side event titled “SDGs Implementation in countries of Central Asia” hosted by the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the UN. I was able to briefly chat with Ambassador Mahmaminov before the side event, which made me excited to hear him speak at the side event as well. Dr. Abdrisaev, UIMF adviser and I discussed at great lengths what initiatives Tajikistan has been undertaking to promote sustainable development in their country, which was especially relevant to UIMF interests as Tajikistan is a country with 99% of its territory covered by mountains. At the side event on July 18th, Mr. Mahmaminov passionately spoke about the successes and shortcomings of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Most notably, he said that even though the SDGs have been in existence for three years, many countries are falling behind in their commitment to implement many of them, especially those highlighted in this year’s HLPF. One specific aspect of this HLPF, building sustainable and resilient societies, has been neglected by many countries. Mr. Mahmaminov then proclaimed that Tajikistan takes implementation of the SDGs very seriously. One particular SDG Tajikistan takes very seriously is sustainable and clean water use.

Tajikistan has shown its devotion to the sustainable use of water in a variety of ways. Mr. Mahmaminov shared a variety of initiatives and reforms to their water sector in Tajikistan. These reforms are wide reaching and designed to help establish more sustainable water usage for not only Tajikistan, but the entire Central Asian region. Tajikistan also shared strategic resources they had to help save the Aral Sea, which Mr. Mahmaminov said was to ensure peace and stability in the region. Mr. Mahmaminov closed his remarks at the side event by reminding us that ultimately the SDGs are about people and bettering the quality of life of everyone. I thought this final statement was rather fitting and reminded us all that we really do need remember what the SDGs are about.



Samuel Elzinga attending Tajikistan's side event

On Thursday, July 19th, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev and I attended the Permanent Mission of Tajikistan's side event on the Dushanbe High Level Political Forum on water, which was held from June 20-22, 2018. The conference was held to discuss the "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-2028-decade objectives and methods for supporting the implementation of the 2030 SDG agenda in the Decade for Water. UN Forum in Dushanbe was also held to start the discussion on water sustainability before the HLFP and to carry the goals set to New York for the UN Forum. The conference "built on the outcomes of the Eighth World Water Forum, the High-Level Panel on Water, the Water for Life Decade, and other major water-related events and platforms at the global and regional levels. According to the [official report](#) of the Dushanbe Water Conference, the conference was a success, with all parties being satisfied with the outcome. Side event on July 19, 2018 hosted an impressive panel of representatives of different international organizations and countries, which attended the Dushanbe Forum, and among them were UNDP,

the FAO, UNESCO, UDESA, World Bank, the Finance Center for South-South Cooperation, Egypt, Thailand, Canada, Russia, and others who we were not able to see present. Tajikistan was represented by Mr. Sulton Rahimzoda first deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources. It was not a surprise for me to see how the 2018 HLPF Ministerial Document emphasized the importance of the water decade initiative of Tajikistan.

Tajikistan is clearly a model of sustainable development, particularly in water sustainability, and I think Utah and the UIMF as a whole could learn a lot from their example. Tajikistan is the undoubted leader of water sustainability, and I hope the UIMF can continue to learn from their example. Our members would have such an opportunity when Ambassador Mahmaminov visit UVU possibly during this coming fall.

Samuel Elzinga, President, Foreign Affairs club at UVU