

UIMF discusses SDG17 with PR of Uzbekistan to UN



(L to R): Andrew Jensen, Samuel Elzinga, Ambassador Bakhtiyor Ibragimov, Damon Ashcraft and Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev after the meeting

On Tuesday, July 17, 2018, the second day of the visit to the United Nations (UN) High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, Damon Ashcraft, Andrew Jensen, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev and myself, members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) delegation were able to meet with the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Bakhtiyor Ibragimov. Meeting took place at Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan, located two blocks from the UN. It was substantive meeting and covered a variety of topics from sustainable development to building resilient societies in Central Asia.

Utah Valley University (UVU) was able to build a strong partnership with Ambassador Ibragimov and the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations; VIP official from Uzbekistan visited UVU in February 2018 and I was able to attend several event with

Ambassador Ibragimov at that time ([link: http://utahimf.org/archives/3250](http://utahimf.org/archives/3250)). After that, the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan was a co-sponsor of the side event for UVU to advocate for mountain women during the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 19, 2018 (<http://utahimf.org/archives/3306>). Ambassador Bakhtiyor Ibragimov was very kind to meet with UIMF members and speak on a variety of topics during that visit as well.

During the meeting on July 17, 2018, the UIMF delegation expressed appreciation to Ambassador Bakhtiyor Ibragimov for assisting in UVU activities at the UN and to the students engaged learning model to implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular. This meeting was arranged through that model and I was personally involved with Mr. Karaev, a diplomat from the Uzbek mission to handle the protocol and logistics for the meeting with PR of Uzbekistan.

Ambassador Ibragimov informed us about Uzbekistan priorities at the UN. Uzbekistan has been a large proponent of supporting and implementing the UN SDGs in the Central Asian region, particularly related to SDG 17, which focuses on strategic partnerships to promote sustainable development. Uzbekistan has taken the implementation of this SDG in many aspects of its foreign policy and partnerships in the Central Asian region as well. As Ambassador Ibragimov mentioned, on June 22nd, 2018 the General Assembly adopted a resolution titled [“Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian Region,”](#) which was drafted by Uzbekistan and its Central Asian neighbors. The resolution strengthens economic, security, water, and energy cooperation among the Central Asian countries. The need for stronger integration in Central Asia on all fronts was noted in the resolution and passed unanimously in the UN General Assembly.

Ambassador Ibragimov highlighted how Uzbekistan will contribute further to this increased coordination. Central Asian countries are in the process of finalizing the activities of C5+1, an organization of the 5 Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. The hope for the C5+1 is to bring greater peace to Afghanistan. A high-level meeting was held in March 2018 in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan to further help the peace process in Afghanistan. PR of Uzbekistan to the UN remarked that special attention was paid to the Taliban’s role in Afghanistan, and one of the potential solutions Uzbekistan will try is to further legitimize the Taliban as a functioning political party in the country and to try to help it moderate platform. This was surprising to us, but after an explanation of how the hopeful de-escalation would work

it made more sense. Uzbekistan is also looking to increase Afghanistan's capacity in other ways, mainly centered around trade. Uzbekistan is one of the largest energy producers in the region, and it has begun exporting electricity to Afghanistan to help revamp infrastructure in the northern region of the country. Uzbekistan also focuses on other areas of cooperation in addition to trade as well.



UIMF Students discuss peacebuilding in Afghanistan with PR of Uzbekistan to the UN, H.E. Mr. Bakhtiyor Ibragimov

As Ambassador Ibragimov mentioned, one of the most interesting programs, which Uzbekistan is implementing, is to provide training and education to Afghan students by bringing them to Uzbekistan. After these Afghan students are given education and special job training, they are able to better serve their communities back home. Ultimately, the goal of Uzbekistan is to help build Afghanistan up into a sustainable and resilient society, one of the core themes for this year's High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development. Ambassador Ibragimov mentioned also that students from Columbia University visited recently Uzbekistan and planted there trees. As members of our delegation got onto the topic of sustainable development and education in Uzbekistan, they discussed potentially establishing a study abroad program to Uzbekistan that will focus in sustainable development in the Aral Sea, one of the most environmentally ravaged areas in the world. This would be a great opportunity for students in the future, and if we can get approval from the proper authorities, I think it would be a really great opportunity to further promote sustainable development and the goals of the UIMF. The meeting

was very substantive, and I am hopeful we can continue to build a great relationship with the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the UN.

Samuel Elzinga, President Foreign Affairs Club at UVU