

UIMF discussed mountain targets with envoy of Kyrgyzstan during 2018 HLPF



(L to R) Samuel Elzinga, Damon Ashcraft, H.E. Mrs. Mirgul Moldoisaeva, Andrew Jensen, and Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev

On Wednesday, July 18th, members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU), were able to meet with Her Excellency Mrs. Mirgul Moldoisaeva, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations (UN). The visit to the Permanent Mission of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN was of particular interest to our delegation as Kyrgyzstan is one of the most mountainous countries on Earth and the one of the most mountainous country in Central Asia, after Tajikistan. UVU is also a partners since 2007 with the International University of Kyrgyzstan (IUK): UVU and IUK jointly co-hosted the international Women of the Mountains Conferences since that time. And our oral statement mentions that our student host WOMCs together with our Kyrgyz peers. Since the delegation was at the UN to advocate for mountain communities and discuss the implementation

of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in mountainous areas, it seemed only fitting that we visit Permanent Mission of the Kyrgyz Republic to discuss sustainable mountain development (SMD) and implementation of mountain targets in Central Asia in addition to joint projects which UIMF members are partnering with their Kyrgyz counterparts.

Her Excellency Mrs. Mirgul Moldoisaeva opened the conversation by stating how active Kyrgyzstan has been to promote the UN SMD agenda. Kyrgyzstan has helped establish many global initiatives that focus on SMD, one of the most notable and recurring examples of this being International Mountain Day, which is celebrated on December 11th after the celebration of the International Year of Mountains under the UN umbrella by the initiative of a group of mountain nations, Kyrgyzstan included in 2002. As Ambassador Moidoisaeva mentioned, the another initiative pioneered by the Kyrgyz government is the [World Mountain Forum 2018 \(WMF 2018\)](#), which will be hosted in Bishkek on October 23-26, 2018. The main goal of the WMF 2018 is to provide a voice to mountain communities and the challenges they are facing in an era of rapid climate change to ensure the mountains thrive in the future. One of the main focuses of this conference will be to “position and reference the SMD agenda in regional and global debates.” It is a point of pride for the entire UIMF delegation to contribute to this specific goal of the WMF 2018 by presenting an oral statement on mountain targets on July 19th during general debates.

Kyrgyzstan has also helped further the SMD agenda in other ways as well. Kyrgyzstan has been an avid supporter of preserving the snow leopard, its national animal. On August 25th, 2017, it held a conference on [preserving the snow leopard and mountain ecosystems in Asia](#). It was attended by many countries, including the four of the five Central Asian nations, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Mongolia, Nepal, India, Bhutan, and the Russian Federation. These

countries all adopted a resolution which acknowledges the need to preserve the snow leopard's habitat, which is often times mountainous. These nations will continue to support ecosystem preservation and restoration to stabilize and preserve the snow leopard population. This resolution will impact the SMD agenda by preserving mountain environments in Asia, which are vital to ecosystems across the continent.



UIMF delegation discussing the SMD agenda at the Kyrgyz Permanent Mission

Her Excellency Ms. Moldoisaeva discussed one other way Kyrgyzstan is supporting the SMD agenda at the UN, though she could not give much insight into it right now. Currently, Kyrgyzstan is drafting a UN resolution asking for aid in the cleanup process of uranium tailings in the southern part of the country that are currently contaminating drinking water. This is a very

important endeavor and one that Moab, a Utah community, knows all too well. It was very intriguing for me to discuss the similarities between Moab's uranium tailings issues and Kyrgyzstan's. I particularly enjoyed this discussion, as I wrote a paper for the UIMF journal, *Youth and the Mountains*, concerning mining in my home state of Colorado. I am very interested in this resolution and will be following it closely as it moves from drafting to implementation.

The visit to the Kyrgyz Permanent Mission and meeting with top envoy to the UN from that country was very insightful and provided every member of our delegation new knowledge and insight into the implementation of the SMD agenda at a national level. I am hopeful we can establish a more regular and formal partnership with Ambassador Moldoisaeva and her staff, as they would be a strategic ally in the implementation of the mountain targets of the 2030 UN Development agenda.

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