

Ambassador Mahmaminov about sustainable development in Tajikistan



Ambassador Mahmaminov speaks at Utah Valley University

On October 5th, 2108, Utah Valley University, in cooperation with the Utah International Mountain Forum and Foreign Affairs Club, had the opportunity to host His Excellency, Mr. Mahmamin Mahmaminov, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations. His visit was mostly focused on Sustainable Development, and how Tajikistan has implemented Sustainable Development Goal #6, which deals in the use of sustainable water resource development.

Utah is an excellent partner for Tajikistan, as many of the same issues that face mountainous areas are the same. We learned that the vast majority of Tajikistan is mountainous, with just a small part of the country available for agriculture, and very few large bodies of water available for irrigation. Our water, irrigation, and climates are all very similar, as are many of the problems that we face.

Tajikistan since the fall of the Soviet Union has focused on developing their water resources by erecting dams in front of their mountain river sources and using hydroelectric power to supply electricity to their citizens and national neighbors. They are nearing completion on one of the largest dams ever constructed, that will nearly double their energy output. It will allow the country to have a more stable, and reliable source of electricity for their citizens, so that brownouts will be a thing of the past.

This dam project however has caused some concerns with Tajikistan's neighbors, mostly concerning water coming downstream. Mr. Mahmaminov has spoken to the issue and that most of these fears and issues have been allayed through communication and cooperation with neighbor nations. Tajikistan is also looking to help provide not only electricity for their own citizens, but also for their neighbors as well.



Audience during the presentation of Ambassador Mahmaminov

They have also planned to use this dam and other sources to start exporting energy to other nations, in particular the northern regions of Afghanistan. Lines are being developed, leading into the region in cooperation with a US backed project that is aiming to bring power to many

neighboring nations who either don't have it, or have limited or unreliable access to electricity. This could help improve the lives of those in northern Afghanistan and help stabilize the region against Taliban extremism.

Tajikistan itself is very concerned about extremism, not only in Afghanistan, but also among own people. It has spent much effort on developing their own economy and helping people out of poverty. They have been able to reduce the poverty in their nation by over 40%. Including improvements in education and employment this reduces the chance that members of their country will be less incentivized to radicalize. They have however, experienced some cases of terrorism and extremism.

Tajikistan shares a large border with Afghanistan, and as the Taliban continues to take more and more territory from the government forces, Tajikistan is spending an appreciable portion of their GDP on supporting border security and preventing extremist elements from crossing into their country. They have a vested interest in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan, and part of why they are assisting in bringing electricity to northern Afghanistan. This region, that makes up the southern border of Tajikistan, can use the support and is often at risk of radicalization. If Tajikistan can help in improving and calming the area, it will be able to reduce the resources necessary in protecting their border.

Ambassador Mahmaminov has hope for the future of his nation, as it continues pursuing their development goals in order to improve the lives of their citizens, and the lives of those in the region. They look towards the future as a center of energy production and export for the entire region of Central Asia. They are poised to be a leader in energy and development and an example for all their neighbors and the world at large. Utah would benefit from a close partnership with Tajikistan. Both are faced with similar challenges from a growth in energy and water needs as populations grow and as both deal with the impact of climate change.

By Brandon Pedler, President German Club, Member UIMF