

## Visit of the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the UN, Ambassador Mahmaminov to UVU



*Emma Warner with Ambassador Mahmaminov*

On October 5, 2018, Utah Valley University (UVU) Office for Global Engagement, partnering with the student run clubs such as the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) and the Foreign Affairs Club, had the privilege of hosting Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations (UN), His Excellency Mr. Mahmamin Mahmaminov. During his time with the UN, Mr. Mahmaminov has focused on sustainable water development for not only Tajikistan, but for Central Asia as well.

In his lecture to the UVU students, Mr. Mahmaminov talked about the similarities between Utah and Tajikistan. He said that as he flew into the Salt Lake City International Airport, looking out the window, he felt like he was coming home. This sentiment was reinforced by the

welcome and hospitality he has received while being in Utah. From his comments, I learned that the people of Tajikistan are warm and welcoming and that the natural terrain of Utah and Tajikistan are similar. These similarities make it possible for Utah and Tajikistan to work together and to help each other on common issues people of the mountains face.

In the lecture VIP guest described some of the issues Tajikistan is currently facing and first because it is one of the main water sources for Central Asia. 60% of the water that is available in Central Asia is located in Tajikistan. From that amount of water, Tajikistan uses about 5% only. This is amazing and allows Tajikistan to help it's neighbors by sharing water and providing them the ability to progress.

Tajikistan has a rich history that goes back centuries to the time of the Silk Road. Many of the routes included in the Silk Road went through Tajikistan to reach the rest of the world. This rich history and prime location make Tajikistan an important player in world affairs. People of Tajikistan have been working to become such a player since their independence from the Soviet Union. To achieve this goal, it is important for Tajikistan to implement sustainable development practices.

Tajikistan has taken this to heart and has been continuously working of achieving sustainable development. In addition to creating a system of sustainable water conservation, Tajikistan has been working for about 15 years to decrease it's poverty levels. As of 2017, the poverty level of Tajikistan reached 29.7%, and this is amazing considering that when they started the poverty level was 80%. Tajikistan is also working on creating a secure future for its youth by providing jobs and education. These two goals are multifaceted, because if your population is educated and has the opportunity for stable work this allows the nation to advance and to become prosperous. The success of these two goals also helps in preventing the spread of violent extremism, radicalization, and drug trafficking. These particular issues are of great concern to the Tajik government because of the border they share with Afghanistan. The spread of radicalism and drug trafficking is not only an issue for Tajikistan, but also for the world. I asked Ambassador Mahmaminov what can other nations do to help Tajikistan in their efforts to stop these issues, and his answer was surprising to me. Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the UN said that if the world were to work together to help Afghanistan develop a system of sustainable economic development, then the need among ordinary people to join radical groups goes down. He spoke of what Tajikistan has done to help those in Afghanistan along the border. For example, just by giving

them electricity, and teaching how to grow their own food, Tajik side noticed how these problems began to decrease. He also said that this is not something Tajikistan can do on it's own, but it can be accomplished with the help of the international community.

It was a great privilege to hear views about the role of sustainable development goals (SDGs) for Tajikistan from Ambassador Mahmaminov. It was also a great opportunity to get a new perspective from VIP-guest on how we can solve issues that affect the world. Just like Tajikistan we, at UVU are looking for ways to engage the youth in implementation of SDGs and by providing experiences such as these, future generations can work together to make our world a better place.

*By Emma Warner, National Security Studies Club at UVU*