

Learning About Tajikistan from Ambassador Mahmadaminov



Ambassador Mahmadaminov during presentation at UVU

The Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations (UN), Ambassador Mahmadamin Mahmadaminov, honored Utah Valley University (UVU) with a visit to the campus and presenting a detailed discussion about the country of Tajikistan to a group of university students and instructors on October 5, 2018. In his discussion, the Ambassador highlighted several aspects of the country including its geography, its resources and industries, the population's values and culture, and some of the large issues the country faces today.

The Ambassador was quick to note several similarities between his country and the state of Utah, especially the physical geography of the regions have much in common. Tajikistan is in the heart of Central Asia and is a mountainous region much like Utah; both countries also have a very similar in climate. Tajikistan is known as the land of mountains and lakes, rightly so as more than half of their land is considered mountainous terrain and the country holds about 1,400 lakes.

Due to the many lakes and plentiful water sources, hydropower is a very large industry in Tajikistan. Their plentiful water sources also allow the country to supply much needed water to

neighboring countries. Tajikistan also has a very rich industry in agriculture, especially with cotton and wheat. These industries help employ a very large percentage of the country's population and give rise to a steady economy and job market. Tajikistan is also rich in many minerals and resources such as uranium, mercury, coal, lead, silver, and gold. All of these resources come together to help build up the economy of Tajikistan and employ its people.

The Ambassador Mahmaminov made further connections between Utah and Tajikistan mentioning the kindness of the people here and the family-centered culture that thrives in Utah. Tajikistan is very family oriented, they are very traditional in their beliefs of what makes up a family and believes that the family is the center unit to their society. It is no doubt that he could find such similarities here in Utah, due to the popular religious culture that resides here that also upholds families and supports such traditional values. The Ambassador discussed that the support of traditional family structure in their society aids in alleviating hunger, increases education, allows greater equality for women and empowers them, and promotes better public health services. He felt very strongly that the family is what holds society together, he felt that this unit needs to be promoted and protected.

The Ambassador mentioned several other values of Tajikistan's society, arguably the most pressed value presented was education. Tajikistan takes education very seriously and feels that it is the solution to many societal issues. They pride themselves in their University of Central Asia that serves the mountain communities of Central Asian region. The Ambassador was very proud of this achievement and vocal about the push for education in his country.

One of the reasons why education is so important to Tajikistan's society, is that they face several issues regarding radicalism in their country. Tajikistan shares a long border with Afghanistan, a central location for Islamic radicalism. Education is important to Tajikistan because about 54% of their population is made up of young adults, a primary target for recruitment by radicals. By educating these young people, they are much more likely to turn away from radicalism and grow to be contributing citizens to Tajikistan that can help fight against terrorism in their region. The border of Afghanistan is such a prevalent problem for Tajikistan that they spend 40% of their budget on border control. They do not want radical Islam creeping into their country, which is why education of young people is so vital to their country's wellbeing.



Emma Warner asks question from Ambassador Mahmadinov

Following the discussion on the issue of terrorism, Emma Warner, a UVU student asked what is the best thing that can be done to help prevent the spread of terrorism and possibly eradicate it all together. The Ambassador's answer was somewhat profound, as he stated that the best thing the United States or any country can do is help Afghanistan develop economically and socially. He said that if Afghanistan could become more supported in these ways, terrorism would start to decrease as education becomes more available to more young individuals which will prevent them from radicalizing. This answer follows closely with the Ambassador's overall theme of a global community. He stressed the point that countries need to cooperate and work together through positive international relations to help eliminate world issues such as terrorism. He shared with the audience how Tajikistan implements the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, which are world wide goals to end things like poverty, provide health care and food, provide quality education, promote gender equality, and several more. The Ambassador helped the students present feel a sense of duty to come together world wide to help make these goals reality and work together to create a better international society.

This was very inspiring presentation, which I enjoyed very much. It also demonstrated to many of us, students in the audience, how Utah could serve as a model in sustainable development for many mountain communities around the world like the ones in Tajikistan and learn important lessons from their experiences as well.

Kenya Litster, Political Science Major, UVU Student