

Contributing to the Utah Valley University UN/ NGO Conference



Dr. Baldomero Lago, CIO and Rector for Global Engagement office at UVU speaks at the conference

On October 27, 2018, I had the opportunity to attend the 2018 UN NGO conference at Utah Valley University (UVU) located in Orem, Utah. The event was a preparatory step for the global UN/NGO conference, which will be hosted jointly by Salt Lake City and UVU in August 2019. The conference featured talks and presentation prepared by many different, very valuable, non-governmental organizations such as **Big Ocean Women** or **Global relief**. We were also privileged to hear from representatives from the United Nations and from UVU's President Tuminez among other amazing talks. The overall atmosphere coming away from the conference was a call to action to reach out to local communities and get involved in local initiatives while at the same time extending a call those in attendance to reach out to those across the world in less fortunate circumstances or to those in need. The organizing committee of the next year conference plans to engage UVU students in hosting event. Therefore, many UVU students including members of the

Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at UVU, have been invited this time to assist and learn more about agenda and activities for the next year. Due to that, I was pleased to be volunteering as a camera operator. It was a unique ‘front row seat’ to each of the talks. However, because of this I wasn’t able to take notes and focus on the content of each of the talks as I usually would, so I’ll write about just a few of the talks.

While all of the talks were well prepared and many were very educating, two of my personal favorites were talks given by the founder of Big Ocean Women and President Tuminez. As a woman these particular presentations were especially inspiring. I came away with an immovably strong message: change the women, change the world. Strengthen the women, strengthen the world **and more**. The founder of Big Ocean Women, Carolina Allen, is a local to Provo, Utah, and has a somewhat unique message on feminism in today’s trends. Among other values the organization upholds, that is: motherhood. Allen spoke on how Big Ocean Women was inspired and started, on her story of searching for the identity of who women are in the world and who she was. Uniquely, she continued with a few statistics that many of the world’s adult women are mothers. She pointed that the comradery between women in any role, especially motherhood, is of the utmost importance to protect and build and that doing so has immense benefits in families, communities, and eventually the world.

Not only does the organization stand for supporting women in motherhood, but equally in their families and in their faith. Big Ocean Women’s motto is “faith, family, and motherhood”. Allen talked about this in how she told the organizations’ origin story. She also supported these points with statistics. She talked about the importance of strengthening women in these areas and how doing so strengthens other parts of a community and our very societies. Allen was inspiring as she spoke on the power of women and even more so as she invited those in attendance to be a part of the lifting power of this organization.

Likewise, on the same powerful, pro-women vein was President Tuminez’s presentation. I found myself being inspired by her as a woman with an education. She spoke on some of her experiences and opportunities to learn and grow in her lifetime before becoming UVU’s President, including in various countries around the world. Tuminez also spoke on some of the suffering she saw and how she saw others overcome. Many of the stories she told touched on the point of overcoming and on empowering others, especially women. She spoke on the importance of education, and embodied that as she spoke, not-for-profit organizations, technology, etc. and how

students, not-for-profits, and others can be a part of using, building, improving, and spreading those things.

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