

Mr. Maher Nasser from UN-DPI Spoke about SDGs at UVU



Mr. Maher Nasser, the Director of the Outreach Division of the United Nations Department of Public Information speaks before UVU audience

Mr. Maher Nasser, the Director of the Outreach Division of the United Nations Department of Public Information visited by the invitation of the Utah Valley University (UVU) office of Global Engagement and spoke before the faculty and students at UVU on November 28, 2018. His lecture was titled: “The Case for Multilateralism, and Why Achieving the SDGs is a Collective Responsibility.”

Mr. Nasser has been a part of the United Nations (U.N.) for 31 years. Many people think of the U.N. as just this glass tower in New York that meets and talks on issues—it is much more than that. There are 53 organizations within the U.N. 45% of the children worldwide receive vaccines from an organization within the U.N. If someone thinks about all the flights around the world happening at once, that is regulated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Whether you realize it or not just about every aspect of our life is touched by the U.N.

As Mr. Nasser mentioned, the parts we see on the news about U.N. is all the grid lock on the Security Council or General Assembly. What we do not see is 81% of regulations passing. The world problems we see such as terrorism move around and recruit without borders. Through the internet and other means, they operate everywhere around the world. This is an important issue for the U.N. they want to fight it, without giving up human rights. Because of behind the scenes work by the U.N. we don't see many conflicts play out. This is an aspect of the U.N. that is hard to measure as success. When they prevent conflicts or famines from happening we don't know what would of come without their help, but we can assume it was a solution for the better. The pillars of the U.N. are Security, Prevention, and Human rights. Human rights are a key pillar to the U.N. for him. We are all born free and equal. if you look back to 1945 when the U.N. was organized by 51 countries. There are now 193 member-states and that original document applies as much to those original 51 countries as it does to every country today. The Human Rights office wasn't fully enacted until the 1990's. The current commissioner of this council is the former president of Chile. Their purpose is to call out those who violate human rights.

Another aspect the U.N. helps with is coordination on humanitarian efforts. For example, if there was a huge tsunami in Indonesia, and all the humanitarian groups brought blankets then there would be no food, or anything else. U.N. coordinates and supports the groups to help out those affected by the disaster at hand. This leads to the issue of climate change. This is a growing problem for the U.N. because there are many people being displaced by climate change. The majority of scientists agree that climate change is influenced by humans and it will just make all the climates more intense. If you live in a dry area—it'll be drier, so on and so forth. If we look to the ice caps that are melting, we see sea levels rising that could wipe out entire island nations and displace the majority of the inhabitants of the earth. When you look at the U.N. agenda for climate change, then, yes it was made by the world leaders, but it was derived from us the citizens of the world. It was based off our needs and thoughts. With all the challenges we see today if you leave it to just the government, then it will not happen. Change has to start with us. There are 7 billion people on the Earth. And 800 million go to bed hungry every night. By 2030 we will have 9 billion people. How are we going to sustain ourselves? Our engagement with these issues isn't just defined by political goals - they are literally defining our future wellbeing. What we do now is going to directly effect our life and the life of our children. We have gotten pass the point of enlightenment and understanding and are to the point of action.

I feel the Mr. Nasser was very inspiring in first highlighting the many successes of the lesser known parts of the U.N. There are branches of the U.N. all around the world doing good, and having success, even though the headlines on the news are always about deadlock, and fights at the Security Council. I also appreciated his plea to us as young people. Millennials are now the biggest voting bloc in the US, and it is our duty to take control and take care of our future. This is our future, so we deserve a spot at the table. If it is not offered to us, as he cautioned, then it has to be taken. Things are not given to us in this life—we have to take it for ourselves.

Jesse Sandstrom, UVU Student