

UN Director Maher Nasser Speaks at UVU on Multilateralism



Mr. Maher Nasser speaks at Utah Valley University

On 30 NOVEMBER 2018, Utah Valley University hosted Maher Nasser, Director of Outreach Division for the Department of Public Information at the United Nations as he spoke on the importance of multilateral efforts in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN set these ambitious and wide-encompassing goals to be accomplished by 2030. The goals include things like the eradication of hunger and poverty, as well as improving developing countries' reliable access to resources such as clean drinking water.

Mr. Maher Nasser talked at length on the need for a multilateral effort in achieving these impressive goals. He said that this would require not only country governments coordinating actions and resources, but also the engagement of regular citizens. His role as the Director of Outreach within the Department of Public Information is to bring the conversation to the public; to inform them of the problems facing the UN and the world, and to enlist the public's help in finding solutions.

Mr. Nasser highlighted some of the challenges facing all countries in coming years: the rising sea levels forcing coast inhabitants to move inland (frightening when one considers that most of Earth's population lives along a coastline), the depletion of clean drinking water, and the staggering fact that 800 million people go to sleep each night hungry or insecure.

The sentiments he expressed conveyed the personal connection and experience Mr. Nasser has built up over his lifetime. Being on the receiving end of multilateral aid as a Palestinian refugee, and then on the organizing and giving end over his 30 years of working at the United Nations.

Despite these challenges, Mr. Nasser's message was one of hope. He explained how solutions are available and possible. He listed the example of how in the 1980's, it was discovered that Earth's ozone layer was being depleted due to negative emission externalities.

The Montreal Protocol was an international treaty developed to combat this, wherein the party countries adopted regulations of chemical development and usage that ultimately accomplished much in changing harmful policies and starting to restore the ozone layer.

Mr. Maher Nasser's bottom line up front was that problems related to natural resource depletion, climate change, crime, and health are ones that concern every country and government. Thus, solutions must be arrived at through working together multilaterally. And equally as important, the rising generations must be active in finding solutions. As Mr. Nasser said, "don't wait to be invited to the table to discuss issues that are important to you- come to the table yourself."

Joseph Lloyd, Director of Global Operations, UIMF/Foreign Affairs