

UIMF celebrates the ninth International Mountain Day



Dr. Baldomero Lago speaks at UVU.

On December 5th, 2018, the Utah International Mountain (UIMF) hosted the prestigious event known as the ninth International Mountain Day (IMD). At the beginning, Sam Elzinga, the UVU Foreign Affairs President congratulated UIMF's members with many achievements in promoting the mountain agenda. After that Michael Hinatsu, Member of Foreign Affairs club introduced Dr. Lago, Vice-rector of Global Engagement office at UVU. Dr. Lago said "my dear student colleagues, that all the things that I do in this office, in my office, and in companionship with these other people who take pictures and help, all of this is here to support you. We're here to help make you have an experience to promote your life and help you become a global citizen. We'll do all that we can to benefit not only your personal and professional agenda but also to have a voice to have a voice in our community as well as to have a voice at the United Nations in the global agenda." All this was started a couple years ago when Dr. Lago was able to host Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN, Ambassador Macharia Kamau. UN guest talked from the

same pulpit and talked about sustainable goals. After that, he called for action and it was a moment for Dr. Lago to start to work with local leaders, university leaders, and other leaders to promote the sustainable development agenda.

Dr. Lago mentioned that UVU is able now to not only bring dignitaries from around the world and represent at the United Nations. UVU is known for work on the international stage. Just last week UVU hosted Mr. Maher Nasser, who is the Director of outreach for UN Department of Public Information. Mr. Nasser spoke at UVU and with local leaders to see possibilities about the NGO worldwide conference that will take place in August of next year in the state of Utah. The UN Secretary General will participate in the forum. This is such a great opportunity to be the first site setting up a precedent in the United States to be able to host a UN event outside what we call the blue zone, outside the New York Headquarters.

Indeed, there are many eyes looking at UVU not only in New York but also worldwide. The president of a University in Salamanca, Spain just talked to Dr. Lago about a movement in all European members called the Kangria project. Kangria is a town in Portugal and all universities decided to come up with a sustainability agenda. Now, universities in Europe are actually looking at UVU and looking at what UVU is planning to do in the next year. Dr. Lago had already been contacted by a university in England where after 2019 the UN/ DPI conference will take place. The United Nations is just an arena, just like in the old Roman theatre, where people come from 194 different states. They come there actually to maintain a dialog. At this point, UVU has the voice in this conversation in many different sectors, specifically on the sector for the mountains. On the conference being planned next year, there's a sustainable community. There will be a great opportunity to inform then about UVU engaged learning model, about the sustainable mountain development agenda. The conference will primary focus on NGO relations but UVU is planning to have a side event on sustainable mountain development. UVU really value the continued support from the Mountain Partnership (MP). Dr. Lago invited MP representatives to take part at the conference next year and identify potential mountain partners from local communities in North America. Attending this conference would also be a way to further increase the membership for sustainable mountains in Utah and targets and further implement those targets in this region and globally.

This voice has to be brought up to many other academic institutions. On January 2, 2019 Dr. Lago will meet with public officials and student body presidents of all academic institutions

in the state of Utah. 40% of this conference will be based on youth participation and youth voice. Dr. Lago said that everyone have heard what is happening in the UK with Brexit. The British Parliament and lords are making decisions which plant seeds for the future. But nobody asks the opinions of the youth whether it is good for them. The young people will have to live with decisions made today by older generation.

Mr. Lago said that he plans to bring Ms. Alison Smile, the UN Undersecretary in the first week of February to UVU. Ms. Smile is very interested to come to Utah. It will be a great honor for UVU to have her speak before the student and faculty. Dr. Lago thinks that this will set the tone for what's going to happen. The state of Utah is leading the way when it comes to sustainability. It will help students to raise their voices. UVU Global Engagement office will support student engagement.

The Mayor of Orem Mr. Richard Brunst was then introduced by Andrew Jensen, President of the Model UN at UVU. He was elected as Orem City Mayor in 2013. He is an active contributor to the UN agenda. Mayor Brunst appreciated the opportunity to be at UVU. He mentioned that the pioneers who came to this area came here for refuge, for safety, and for peace.



Mayor Richard Brunst speaks at UVU.

The mountains provide that for local communities and are there to help them in many ways. Mayor Brunst said “When I look at what the mountains have for us, I think about the time 26 years ago when my wife and I built our home in Orem. We live in the northeast section on the hill. My wife and I designed our home and built it accordingly. As I look at it and think about the mountains, the mountains replenish our air, but much more than that. The mountains give us water and recreation and minerals and iron.” As he talked about his home that they built, he realized the cement out front has minerals from the mountains. He realized also the copper pipe that delivers water -- the copper comes from the mountains. So everything made from the materials with their origin in mountains. For example, the electricity, in many cases, comes from hydroelectric plants that are possible because of the water from the mountains. Many things are delivered by rail to this area from other countries. The steel rail is made through iron that comes from the mountains. The wheels are made from iron from the mountains. When someone looks at it, there is lumber under the railroad, which is from the mountains. It's amazing how impactful the mountains are, and we probably don't even think about it. Utah valley is growing and everybody now are very concerned about water supply. Orem is probably best suited for water supply of any city in the county. There are natural springs that come of the nearby mountains. The city of Orem has the best-tasting water in Utah. It was so named two years ago. The water comes of the springs and also deep-water wells through aquifers. We also have water from the Provo River, Jordanelle reservoir, and Deer Creek. That water comes from the mountains as well. As you look at the water coming down the Rocky Mountains, that supplies electricity for many communities south of us. The impact of the mountains is tremendous. It's important to protect this beautiful resource for us and future generations. We need to realize that we have been given this resource to use for our betterment, and also for our children and grandchildren and the communities to come.

At the end of the event, Megan Davis, UIMF member, presented certificates from the Mountain Partnership for contribution to the promotion of mountains to students and faculty who were committed to build this organization. Many of students in the audience received them, including Victoria Bahrii, Stephen Thompson, Abeiw Isawy, Brandon Pedler and others.

Cory Levin, UVU Foreign Affairs Student