

Discussing a sustainable mountain development with the PR of Austria to the UN, H.E. Jan Kickert



Hailee Hodgson with H.E. Mr. Jan Kickert

Students at Utah Valley University (UVU) had the privilege to gather and listen to His Excellency, Jan Kickert, the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations on February 19, 2019. Jan Kickert, became the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations in August 2015. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Kickert was Director General for Political Affairs of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since November 2011. From 2009 to 2011, he served as his country's Ambassador to Croatia. Before that he served in many more government positions.



The luncheon with H.E. Mr. Jan Kickert, his son Ksaver Srdar, with participation of UVU faculty and students.

I was invited to attend a luncheon in honor of Mr. Kickert. During the luncheon I introduced myself, my major, and my involvement in Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU. Then during a small meeting with Mr. Kickert and members of the UIMF, I presented a group of students with whom we will attend the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) in New York in March 2019. Our team of students will promote, through student engaged learning, the state of Utah as the best model for sustainable mountain development (SMD) around the world. We will also highlight the role of women pioneers, families, and local traditions as the foundation of Utah's successful SMD

model and give UVU students opportunities for professional advancement and recognition globally.



UIMF Members meeting with H.E. Mr. Jan Kickert

During meeting I informed VIP-guest that a day before, on February 18, 2019, UIMF members participated in the final online discussion of the CSW63/NGOS on the zero draft document and found that our recommendations and those created by the NGO commission at large were not included in the official draft document created and sent by UNWomen to member states. We asked Mr. Kickert how we can work with his Mission and other Permanent Missions at the United Nations (U.N.) on these matters. He told us that with these high-level debates it can be hard to specify regions or issues in final conclusions. Due to this, the final language needs to concern matters that the larger U.N. influencers care about, for example: access to health

care. However, even then it is difficult to isolate women of the mountains into the final document for this cause, due to the argument that women of the desert or of the marshlands, also need more easily accessible health care as well.



Following this meeting we were able to listen to Mr. Kickert explain a bit of brief history of Austria and their involvement in international law and policy. He related in the years after WWI, Austria suffered a great loss, and needed to find a “niche” to survive among the other European states, so they became a neutral meeting ground for policy and spies alike. This attitude of neutrality remains today, and is a big reason that one of the four U.N. headquarters is in Vienna, the capital of Austria, and has been for more than 40 years. Mr. Kickert emphasized how important the U.N. is in creating policies, specifically because it is a place where every nation in the world is able to represent themselves and connect with each other on common

issues. It is a place where a country like Austria can relate to the Pacific Islands on rising sea levels, and this type of collaboration is vital for these small countries.

The opportunity to discuss these important topics with Mr. Kickert and learn more about Austria and their role in international relations, is just one way I was able to utilize UVU's Student Engaged Learning model and learn more about a country I in a way I wouldn't anywhere else. Not only was able to develop my networking skills and create a connection with someone who can influence changes on a global level, I was able to represent a project and team that I am working with to create a future for students to participate in high level politics. I would not get these opportunities at many other institutions, and for that I am very grateful for the professors at UVU that organize meetings and discussions like these. I look forward to reconnecting with Mr. Kickert in March at the U.N., and hopefully he will have the opportunity to attend our parallel event on Tuesday, March 19, 2019, at the Church Center of the U.N.

Hailee Hodgson, UIMF member