

Richard Jordan Lecture about NGOs Role at UN at UVU



On Monday 8 April 19, 2019, the Foreign Affairs Club in conjunction with the Utah International Mountain Forum hosted Mr. Robert Jordan as a guest of honor, following UIMF trip to New York to take part in CSW 63 and HLPF 2018. Mr. Jordan is the Dean of Non-Governmental representatives in New York City. He has been working with the UN for nearly forty years and said that he has spent most of that time at or in the UN building.

Mr. Jordan was very impressed by Utah Valley University at the CSW and HLPF. He commented on how impressed he was by the students, and now how impressed he was with the campus as well, in particular the Roots of Knowledge Mural. He felt that it helped accurately describe what he called the “Arc of History,” in showing the progress human kind has made over the millennia. He also was impressed by the student presentations and said he had learned much from the students about the status of women and praised UVU for being able to navigate the complexities of the United Nations.



He began his full presentation after these opening remarks with a brief history of his time at the United Nations, mostly beginning in 1989 and the Earth Summit, During this time the Mountain Development Agenda was established, along with several others and the forgotten summit of the 1990's on Trade Efficiency. He touched on the role of ECOSOC in organizing those summits and the changes the UN has undergone since then. Since that time there has been a greater focus on harmonization and coordination of efforts. ECOSOC and the General Assembly have been working more closely with other bodies of the UN to improve efficiency and efficacy of their goals and initiatives.

Mr. Jordan also spoke on the changing and evolving roles of the NGOs within the United Nations. He spoke of many of the changes and improved access NGOs have to bodies of the United Nations in informal brainstorming sessions, group negotiations for the 2030 Agenda, and their ability to speak directly with member states to bring forward their policy agendas and issues. Along with this greater openness and transparency has come open meetings with the Security Council where almost any issue can be discussed from climate change, to Universal Healthcare. He also

remarked that many of the countries currently on the SC regularly devote meetings to meet with NGOs to discuss common issues.

Mr. Jordan then spoke on a variety of topics currently being discussed in the UN such as Women and Girls in Science, Human Security, Earth Covenant and Charter, Road Safety Strategy, Ocean Conferences, and SDG Global Engagement. He touched briefly on each subject, mentioning that he would like the Commission on the Status of Women become the Council on the Status of Women and be a permanent fixture in the UN. On Human Security he spoke about what that actually means, such as having good jobs, social equality, and a roof over one's head, along with other things. He also mentioned that the UN had just celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the adoption of this concept. On road safety he mentioned the Partnership for Safe Journeys and the WHO Strategy and strategies being implemented to protect UN personnel. He placed some emphasis on the upcoming Ocean Conference in Portugal, along with US State Department conferences on the same topic.

He closed the presentation by emphasizing that multilateralism is the only possible and effective response to the challenges the world faces today. He emphasized that Utah Valley University and its students have a catalyzing power for change because they can bring attention to issues that need to be addressed. He was also excited about the NGO conference here in Salt Lake this fall and its focus on SDG 11. We at UVU and members of the UIMF and Foreign Affairs Club were thankful for Mr. Jordan's time and insights, and that he took a break from his busy schedule to come address us and encourage us in our work and education.

Brandon Pedler, President, German Club at UVU