

STATEMENT
Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev
68TH United Nations Civil Society Conference

My name is Baktybek Abdrisaev. I would like to make a statement on behalf of Dr. Ross Butler, also known as Rusty. Since 2016, he has been the main representative at the United Nations for the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, or RANS, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC. I am the alternative representative at the UN of RANS. Twelve years ago, when we started the advocacy campaign of the United Nations sustainable mountain development agenda in the state of Utah and North America, both of us never expected that we would be able to create such an impressive model of Utah Valley University student-engaged learning with the Utah International Mountain Forum, UIMF, a coalition of student clubs as its driving force. Through UIMF students are able to gain professional skills and experiences as a group by self-implementing practical initiatives at local, regional and UN levels, which make a difference in the lives of mountain communities. Importantly, their teachers serve only as advisors.

Today, during this workshop UVU students will demonstrate how they have operated since 2011 when UIMF was created. Our goal is to tell you how faculty and advisors provided them essential assistance as mentors when it was necessary.

In 2007 UVU hosted the First International Women of the Mountains Conference. The 2007 United Nations Secretary General's report on Sustainable Mountain Development highlighted UVU for hosting the conference as a regional gathering to promote both gender and SMD agendas of the UN in North America.

The conference was spearheaded by a group of very impressive women, such as the Elena Bonner, widow of the Nobel Laureate Andrey Sakharov; the first women governor of the State of Montana, Judy Marts; the first women governor of the State of Utah Olene Walker; executive director of the Mountain Institute, Dr. Jane Pratt; and the Honorary Consul General of the Kyrgyz republic in the State of Utah Dr. Danielle Butler, my late wife. What distinguished them was a passion and dedication to the cause of mountain women, who are among the most neglected and forgotten on national and international levels.

UIMF members, by continuing the tradition of the first Women's Conference, were able to host in October 2015 the fourth such conference by themselves, which is the essence of student engaged learning. The UNSG Report on SMD 2016 highlighted UIMF as the host of the conference and contributor to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 in interaction with

three mountain targets. UIMF and UVU were the only academic institution from North America highlighted in that UN document.

Since that time, the Russian Academy is providing opportunities to UIMF and UVU to contribute to the agendas of the most important forums of ECOSOC on sustainable development. UIMF members will report further about their successful actions at the 62nd and 63rd sessions of the Commission of the Status of Women, as well as the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development. RANS will continue to partner with UVU and UIMF in order to continue advocacy of mountain communities and families.