

10th International Mountain Day at Utah Valley University

In response to the United Nations (UN) designating December 11 as International Mountain Day in 2004, Utah Valley University (UVU) as a member of the United Nations Mountain Partnership has celebrated this day. On December 2, 2019, the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of UVU student clubs and other MP members celebrated IMD for the 10th time at UVU campus. During this event students heard from these MP members and presidents of UIMF promoting the Sustainable Development Goals and raising awareness to the goals of UIMF.



Students listen intently as the International Mountain Day celebration begins

I attended the event not as a member of UIMF but as someone who is interested in the 17 sustainable goals and mountain sustainability. There are three UIMF missions that were stated on the of the program for the event. They were as follows; one, to raise awareness of mountain sustainability topics especially in Utah; two, to bring the public into contact with international guests and foreign dignitaries; three, to bring communities together to recognize their shared

mountain heritage. The program consisted of six individuals from an array of backgrounds all advocating for the UIMF and 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The first speaker was Dr. Baldomero Lago. He is the CIO/Vice-Rector for Global Engagement at Utah Valley University. He recognized UVU's influence at the UN, as we have been an advocate for mountainous communities and protecting them as time goes on. Dr. Lago made sure that we knew how much UVU is extending its reach in the global scale. He finished with encouragement that each of us could be included in this voice if we put forth the work to get to the UN through the opportunities from the UIMF.

The second speaker was Dr. Rusty Butler, the main representative at UN for the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, an NGO in general consultative status with ECOSOC. Dr. Butler mentioned the UN Commission on the Status of Women, enlightening the room on the lack of education, and gender specifically in mountainous regions. Highlighting the inequality of women in these regions he repeated Dr. Lago's words of involvement of any one of us if we want to be. He said that if we wanted to present at the UN Commission on the Status of Women we could, we just needed to work for it.

He was followed by Ms. Wendy Jyang. She is the President of the Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, an NGO in special consultative status with ECOSOC. Her main point was about her experience as she worked with others from different backgrounds through her NGO to influence the world. Ms. Jyang has done tons of humanitarian work bringing communities together in their shared mountain heritage.

She was followed by Mr. Uday Teki, the founder and CEO of Project Work Groups. Mr. Teki spoke on all the services mountains provide and the importance of protecting them. He has specifically worked in the eastern part of India with those who were affected by climate change.

The last two were both Vice Presidents of UIMF. They were speaking directly to the youth in the room about what they could do to promote the goals of UIMF and the UN goals of sustainability in a mountainous community. Ms. Lacey Meyer led this section by bringing in her own experience of living in rural Utah, inviting those in those small towns become more aware of the rural issues and advocating them. Mr. Michael Hinatsu expressed the importance of having a youth voice to the campaigns, raising awareness of mountain communities. He also brought up the marginalized voice of women, especially in these regions.



Ms. Lacey Meyer giving her presentation of involving rural Utah.

I left knowing that I could make a difference in the world, whether it be at the UN or even in my community. This event made me excited to graduate with my Political Science degree and have connections to getting involved. I am excited to attend next years International Mountain Day and perhaps join one of the clubs in the coalition of UIMF.

By Hannah Thayne, UVU student