

Statement

**Parallel event “Student Engaged Learning to empower mountain women and girls”
63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Hannah Bieker, member, Utah International Mountain Forum,
a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University**

My name is Hannah Bieker. I am honored to represent Utah Valley University, Rotaract, and speak with my peers about empowering mountain women and girls here at the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. I appreciate the support for my visit from both Utah Valley University and Orem Rotary. I was born in Los Angeles, California but now live in one of the most prosperous states in the entire U.S.: mountainous Utah. But Utah was not always the state it is today. It was founded by the Mormon pioneers and became so successful from the resiliency inherited from their descendants, which transformed a very harsh, dry, and mountainous terrain to the economic powerhouse it is today. Similar to the pioneers who migrated West, my family moved to Utah for a better life.

I recently published a book, titled: Lives, Fortunes and Sacred Honor: The Making of an American, detailing how my grandparents fled the two most oppressed areas after WWII: Jerusalem and East Berlin and later met on a ship in a New York harbor. Including how my family contributes to the Utah model of sustainable development. Through my book, I aim to inspire my peers to empower our own communities and work together to empower mountain women in developing countries. My passion stems from my heritage and deep roots in mountainous Armenia, as that is where my grandfather comes from. For example, my mom grew up being told by her father that she didn't need to worry about an education or acquiring skills for a good job because “the man will provide”. Today, my grandfathers views are much different and he always tells me to focus on my education. My parents instilled in me values that revolve around hard work and perseverance. I know the only person stopping me from accomplishing my goals is myself, and that is the mindset I would like to share with mountain women around the world. Because we know they are the most vulnerable population in the world, but it does not have to stay that way.

As a student at UVU, I have had the honor of interning at the Utah State Capitol and United States Senate in Washington D.C. At the same time, I was able to help mountain women and girls by being involved in the UVU student engaged learning (SEL) initiative, where students address real-world problems as a group with a faculty member serving as a mentor. Through the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, with UVU Rotaract as a part of that coalition, my peers and I contribute to the promotion of the sustainable development of mountain communities in Utah and globally. These exposures have enlightened me to the human experience involved with sustainable development and the challenges mountain women face.

Rotaract, a student club partner of Rotary International, assists fellow Utahns of all ages through efforts like the “Burrito Project” to feed homeless and low income families, “Operation Santa” partnering with police and fire departments to raise around \$10,000 annually for needy families. Rotaract Clubs from the various universities in Utah have focused on a number of fundraisers and service projects for Utahns and teach skills to people around the world such as conflict resolution at the Columbia Peace Project. Skills that locals can implement for the rest of

their lives and can be translated to real world jobs like the creation and management of fish farms in Uganda. In June 2018, 11 Rotaractors throughout Utah went to Puerto Penasco, Mexico and completed 7 service projects including: meeting Polio survivors, building ADA wheelchair accessible ramps, empowerment of children and adults in the community, teaching health education to elementary school children, providing musical instruments for a community orchestra, services to newborn children in maternity wards, and donated supplies for a Hemodialysis Center.

I am delighted that those activities contribute to the main theme of the CSW63 and demonstrate that students and Rotaractors in particular could be contributors to the implementation of the UN 2030 Development Agenda. I hope that next year more Rotaractors and Interactors will report about implementing sustainable development goals at similar ECOSOC forums on sustainable development.