

Statement

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

To begin, I will speak more about issues facing mountain women around the world, and how UIMF seeks to advocate for and empower them. Women and girls in mountain communities worldwide are often neglected at the national and international levels. A 2015 study by the FAO and Mountain Partnership Secretariat revealed that 39% of mountain communities, including women in developing countries, are vulnerable to food insecurity, and that from 2000–2012, 30% more mountain communities suffered from food insecurity, despite only a 16% population growth. Personally, I was raised in a family and community dependent on mountains for grazing, farmland, and irrigation, and have experienced first-hand how even in developed regions, the difference in prosperity between mountain and lowland communities can be stark. Thus, it is important that the UN has designated three mountain targets under the SDGs as important tools for implementing the 2030 development agenda in mountain areas: targets 6.6, 15.1 and 15.4. But they have to be implemented and be in the focus of this session of the Commission on the Status of Women and at the center of the 2030 Development Agenda.

Since 2011, UIMF advocates sustainable mountain development through a student engaged learning model based on the problem-based learning methodology, whereby its members gain professional skills by addressing real-world problems of mountain communities as a group with faculty serving as mentors. In accordance with target 4.7 about the importance for all learners to contribute to implementation of SDGs, UIMF encourages its members, especially non-traditional students, to be an active part of the implementation of the UN 2030 Development agenda. Nontraditional students are those which, among other things, may work full time while attending school, support a family while attending school, or are at least 25 years old. Using SEL, such students in the past through UIMF have achieved a number of accomplishments at the UN level:

- Since 2007, hosted under the umbrella of the UN MP, four WOMCs as implementation of mountain targets with SDG#5 on gender in Utah and North America;
- Advocated for mountain targets’ adoption at the UN Open Working Groups on the SDGs during 2013-2015;
- Made statements advocating for mountain women and targets during the 53rd session of the Commission on Social Development, 62nd CSW, and at the 2018 HLPF on SD.

Through my UIMF participation, I have been empowered to join other nontraditional students like myself to advocate for issues facing mountain women and girls with individuals and organizations in our communities and elsewhere, to attempt to improve mountain women and girls’ livelihoods. Education is essential in this regard; specifically, education can empower others to address issues surrounding the implementation of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as we will hear about during our event today. Since September 2018, I have used SEL specifically to mobilize other nontraditional students to be empowered and empower others as I have experienced, as well as to prepare for our advocacy work in harmony with the priority theme of CSW63:

- We wrote, submitted, and gained approval for a written statement co-sponsored by RANS and Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, which was published by ECOSOC as an official document on November 19, 2018.
- Added language advocating for mountain women to the CSW63 Zero Draft Document during many online conferences with NGO CSW/NY.
- Lobbied for adoption of that language from the UN Secretary-General, ECOSOC President, 46 UN Member States who presented Voluntary National Reviews at the 2018 HLPF on SD, and 54 ECOSOC Member States.

Today, our 11-member student team will demonstrate to you how the SEL model has given us the tools we need to advocate for the implementation of different aspects of SDG#5 in interaction with the mountain targets, as well as how SEL has empowered each of us to work with other students to investigate specific issues facing the women and girls of our communities in Utah.