

**STATEMENT**  
**Dr. Alexander Stecker**  
**68th United Nations Civil Society Conference**

It is my pleasure to speak today during this workshop as part of the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference. My name is Alexander Stecker. Since 2007, as a Coordinator of the Political Science Department I worked together with Rusty Butler in establishing a partnership between the Utah Valley University and the Mountain Partnership under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Dr. Butler at that time was VP for International Affairs and Diplomacy at UVU. The Mountain Partnership coordinates the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Mountain Development Agenda globally. We are proud that the UVU was the first academic institution in North America to join the MP in 2006.

When we hosted on March 8-10, 2007 the First International Women of the Mountains Conference at this campus, it was the first forum which promoted the gender and SMD agendas of the UN by gathering officials and scholars from all mountain states in the Rocky Mountains region. And we did that together with our partners from the International University of Kyrgyzstan under the leadership of Dr. Asylbek Aidaraliev. I would also like to greet here today among the presenters of this workshop Mr. Kurmanbek Diykanbaev, official representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Parliament of the country. This is one more example of a strong friendship and partnership between our two academic institutions and peoples who jointly advocate for the cause of the mountain people.

Today, when we are celebrating here great and successful efforts of our students in advocating the mountain cause and communities at different forums of the United Nations, I would like to mention one more time those individuals who established the foundation for that remarkable educational model. Dr. Butler mentioned already names of Elena Bonner, Jane Pratt, Judy Martz, Olene Walker and Danielle Butler, several remarkable women who were a part of the organizing committee. They are no longer with us but their legacies we could see to be affiliated with the successes of our students in raising an awareness about mountain communities and families.

I would also like to highlight here the special role, which the UVUs History and Political Science Department played in implementing this initiative and assisting students to establish the Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at UVU. My colleagues, such as Dr. Keith Snedegar, Dr. Kathren Brown, Dr. David Connelly, Dr. Jay DeSart and many others provided not only funds, but their own knowledge, experiences and passion for students to be successful in pursuing such a noble goal of helping people in need and especially communities who live in a high altitude in many remote areas around the world. Special role in that efforts was played by the department staff and Kimberly Williamson is one of such former students, who was able to contribute to the success of the students in advocating the mountain cause.

I congratulate UIMF members with being successful through the engaged learning both in their professional advancement and in raising awareness globally about the importance for the mountain communities to be in the focus of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development agenda.