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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-sixth session

14–25 March 2022

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### **Statement submitted by Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, and Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **Mountain women and girls must be in the focus of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

We urge the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure sustainable development for families, women, and girls who live in the mountain areas of the world. The Commission has as a priority theme: the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction.

Since 2007, the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences has initiated and led a partnership with faculty and students at Utah Valley University, the International University of Kyrgyzstan, and Osh Technological University, to jointly advocate for the sustainable development for mountain communities globally. In 2015, Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce joined the partnership. Within this partnership, we further the educational initiatives which, in particular, empower women to combat climate change in the mountainous regions of the Russian Federation, People's Republic of China, Rocky Mountain States in the United States including Utah, and the Kyrgyz Republic among others.

In 2019, the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences facilitated the educational exchanges between the Moscow State University, Russian State Agrarian University – Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, and Utah Valley University during the visit of its faculty and students to Moscow. The purpose of the visit was the joint advocacy of sustainable development for mountain communities in Russia and the United States. As a part of the visit, the Utah Valley University delegation also discussed these issues with Osh Technological University in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic.

As part of that plan of advocacy in the state of Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic, our members will lead the efforts of students from Utah Valley University, and Osh Technological University during this session to present our joint case of the significant impact of climate change on the livelihood of mountain communities, families, and women, and how the educational program, which we developed jointly, encourages students to contribute to its mitigation among their own mountain communities.

Climate change has brought devastating wildfires and extreme drought conditions to the mountains of Utah. Utah Governor Cox and Lieutenant Governor Henderson, the second woman to hold this position in Utah history, urgently focus on practical measures to mitigate climate change impact on rural areas, women, and families through the One Utah Roadmap, a plan for their first 500 days in office. They are supported in those efforts by Utah members of the United States House of Representatives: Congressman John Curtis, who recently established a caucus on climate change in the United States House of Representatives; as well as Congressman Blake Moore, Congressman Burgess Owens, and Congressman Chris Stewart, who also joined this caucus. Senator Mitt Romney, who represents Utah in the United States Senate, provides similar support, in particular through a bipartisan group at the United States Senate to fight against climate change.

The Kyrgyz Republic is one of the most vulnerable countries in Central Asia to climate change impacts, in particular on women, their families, and households. More than 20 types of environment and climate-related hazards and processes can be observed in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Kyrgyz Republic ratified the Paris Agreement in 2019. In April 2020, the Kyrgyz Republic launched the National Climate Change Learning Strategy with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. With

the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, they implemented policies including the Energy Efficiency in Buildings Project. The Kyrgyz Republic, as the leader of the Group of Friends of Mountain Countries at the United Nations, strongly advocates for active involvement of rural and mountain women, including in the Kyrgyz Republic in mitigating the impact of climate change on communities and their livelihoods.

Since 2011, our two organizations have facilitated Utah Valley University efforts to create the co-curricular student-engaged learning model which encourages students to contribute their experiences, knowledge, and funds towards the advocacy of mountain development. The Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University serves as a core of the model. It includes the Foreign Affairs, Sustainable Mountain Development, and Rotaract as the leading clubs in the coalition.

Utah Valley University is the largest academic institution in the state of Utah, currently enrolling almost 40,000 students. Over 30 percent of the student body are non-traditional learners who, in addition to their education, must work full or part-time in support of a spouse or family and can range between 25 to 75 years of age. Established as a vocational training school in 1941, Utah Valley University today addresses the needs of local communities along the Wasatch Mountain range of the Rocky Mountain Region through a dual mission as a community college, combined with the rigor and seriousness of a four-year teaching institution.

The model involves, in inclusive ways, students across campus, both traditional and non-traditional, in the implementation of sustainable development in the mountainous state of Utah and globally. It consists of four parts:

- Students are given a problem to solve (which is the advocacy of the sustainable development for mountain communities);
- Students must work together as a group to learn how to solve the problem;
- Faculty serves them as mentors; and
- Students are responsible for their own learning during the process of solving a problem.

As part of the advocacy campaign, students learn and share experiences about major achievements and challenges in sustainable development in Utah along with mountain communities elsewhere including in Russian Federation, People's Republic of China and the Kyrgyz Republic and under this model, students learn, as a group, how to accomplish projects empowering mountain communities by managing them by themselves through all stages starting from the initial design until their full implementation.

In December 2012, students from Utah Valley University and International University of Kyrgyzstan contributed to the international conference on Mountains and Climate held in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic. During a round table at the same time, they jointly adopted a resolution, highlighting problems, which worsen women situation in the mountain areas, such as traditional views of their low status in the communities; poor infrastructure with deterioration of conditions for economic development; low level and quality of education as one of the major challenges for the active participation of women and girls in solving the issues of preserving the mountain ecosystems where they live.

In December 2015, we contributed to the efforts of students from Utah Valley University, International University of Kyrgyzstan, Osh Technological University, and Kyrgyz Technical University to collect more than 1,600 signatures from the required 5,000 for the petition requesting the issues of the impact of climate change

on mountain communities to be included in the agenda of the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

The model allowed coalition members for the first time to successfully host through the student-engaged learning model the Fourth International Women of the Mountains conference on October 7–9, 2015. The conference participants discussed in particular how climate change impacts mountain women and families during a special session dedicated to this issue. Held under the umbrella of the United Nations Mountain Partnership at Utah Valley University campus in Orem, Utah, the organizing committee of the conference was composed of more than 70 students, including non-traditional learners. The delegation from the Kyrgyz Republic contributed to the conference activities along with 120 other participants: UN officials, diplomats, scholars, and experts from North America and worldwide.

The United Nations Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/71/256](#) of July 29, 2016 highlighted the students' advocacy of gender agenda within sustainable development for mountain communities by hosting the Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference and adopting the outcome document, which contains the following observations:

- Sustainable Development Goal 5 could be achieved through strong support for improving women's rights and welfare, including women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;
- Successful implementation of target 6.6 can be achieved by supporting the vital role that women play in the protection of the environment and water sources, particularly as custodians of traditional knowledge that builds resilience and allows for adaptation to climate change; and
- With respect to target 15.1, women play a critical role in joint planning as promoters of innovation, development, and cooperation for the common benefit.

Since 2016, as our collaborative partners, members of the Utah International Mountain Forum jointly with their peers from the Kyrgyz Republic and People's Republic of China advocate for the implementation of sustainable development in mountain regions at several forums of the United Nations Economic and Social Council on sustainable development, including the fifty-second session of the Commission on Social Development; the sixty-second, sixty-third, sixty-fourth, and sixty-fifth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women; and, the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. During these forums, students, including non-traditional learners, prepare written statements and host parallel and side events. Students also learn how to work with Member States to include language about the importance of sustainable development in the mountain areas and communities in the final documents of those forums.

The United Nations Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/74/209](#) of July 22, 2019 highlights our joint efforts to raise global awareness of issues affecting mountain women at the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held at United Nations Headquarters in March 2018.

Our members will lead the efforts of students from Utah Valley University and Osh Technological University, to contribute to the agenda of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women by hosting a virtual parallel event. The Utah International Mountain Forum members along with students from the Kyrgyz Republic, implement the student-engaged learning model. As a result, they demonstrate their skills in protocol, logistics, developing the agenda and presenting

the case of climate change challenges affecting communities in Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic as well as in the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China.

The model implements Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality in interaction with target 4.7, ensuring that all learners acquire knowledge and skills required to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. The model can be implemented by academic institutions worldwide, especially in mountain regions.

As an important step to empower women from the mountain regions to combat climate change, environment, and disaster risk management, we urge, in particular, mountain Member States to report about their respective actions on that matter.

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