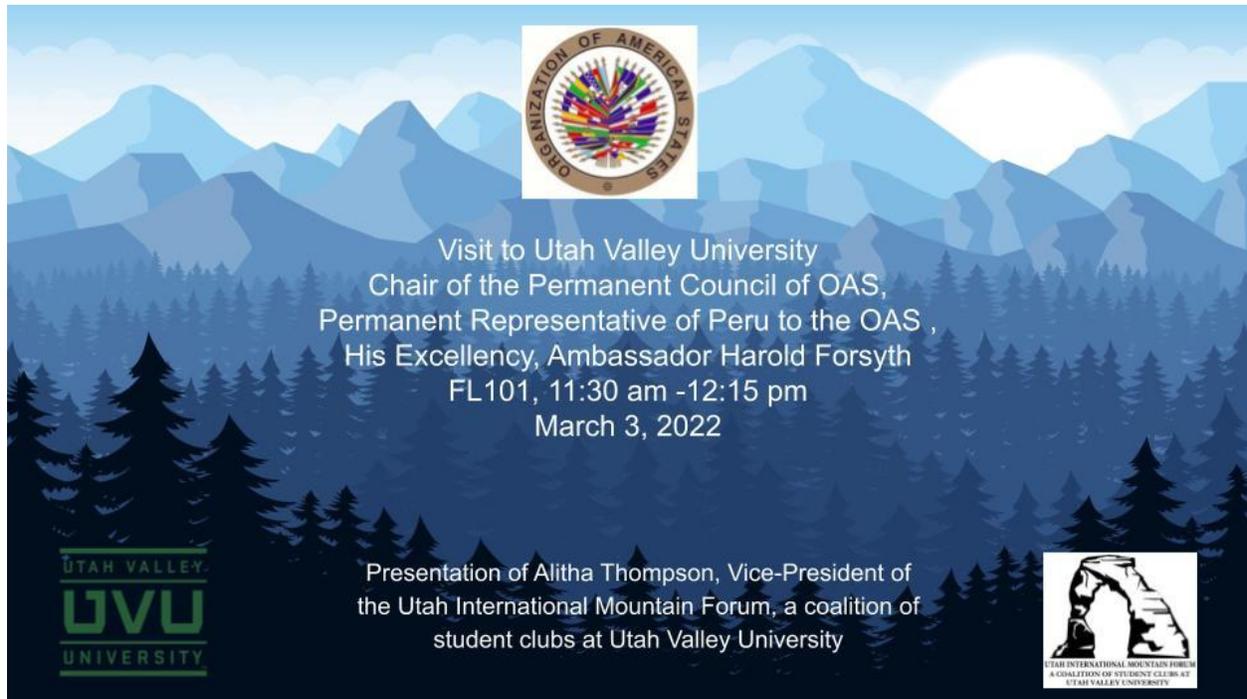


UMIF Presents the Challenges in Mountain Communities to His Excellency, Ambassador Harold Forsyth



Opening slide for the presentation of his Excellency, Ambassador Harold Forsyth

On March 3, 2022, the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a collation of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU), gave a presentation on the challenge facing mountain communities both locally and worldwide. Mountain communities are some of the most neglected and impoverished regions globally. It is the mission of UIMF to bring attention to the needs of these voiceless communities to help families, especially women and children, and provide a higher quality of living. His Excellency Ambassador Harold Forsyth, Permanent Representative of Peru to the Organization of American States (OAS), was invited by Utah Valley University's Global Engagement office to present for the students. As per tradition, members of UIMF were graciously given an hour to hold a private meeting.

As Vice President of UIMF, I presented the work and efforts of the UIMF to advocate for mountain regions, and how the student-engaged learning method has changed the lives of our members. I began by presenting His Excellency a folder with the various documents UIMF has published as well as documents that highlighted our efforts in advocating for mountain communities. I explained how as a mother of 5, I want other mothers to have the same opportunities I have. Many mountain women must send their children away in order to give them a small chance for a better life. In order to provide a meager living, many families are torn apart as they search for jobs. It is why I fight alongside the UIMF. I want to give them the same opportunity and hope I have for my children. I explained that the SEL model gives that hope, because it uses the knowledge and expertise of the group to help teach and learn from one

another. It doesn't require a lot of resources, giving mountain regions an opportunity to pull themselves out of poverty.



Ambassador Forsyth shakes the hand of Boy Scout Quentin Thompson, age 10

As part of the SEL method, we include our families as well as other students. We understand that learners of all ages have a unique voice that can give a different perspective and solution to many global challenges. Even though this presentation was based on UIMF and our accomplishments, as a non-traditional student and mom, my children always come first. I took the opportunity to give my 10 year old son a chance to grow through this experience as well. As an autistic Boy Scout of America, he has been interested in political theory and has been working beside me to find solutions to global problems. Since he is autistic, he finds patterns easily and has a unique perspective to problems that may otherwise seem overwhelming. He came eager to learn and asked the Ambassador what he does to help those in need. Ambassador Forsyth was very kind and treated him with the same respect as a peer. Ambassador Forsyth mentioned how working together as the OAS can be challenging, especially as each country has different needs. The OAS try to be easier partners and share together to accomplish bigger goals together. He encouraged Quentin to continue on his path to make the world a better place.

I began my presentation by briefly outlining the clubs under the UIMF banner and talking about our missions to raise awareness of sustainable mountain development, bring the public into contact with international guests, like Ambassador Forsyth, and bring communities together to recognize their shared mountainous heritage. Through our efforts and the efforts of others who share in our advocacy of mountain communities, the United Nations declared 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development. This resolution gives hope that our mission has not been in vain and gives credence to our actions. We are more than words

and presentations, we make our actions fit our words. We practice the SEL method we promote, reach out to mountain regions globally, and actively work to bring attention to the mountain communities.

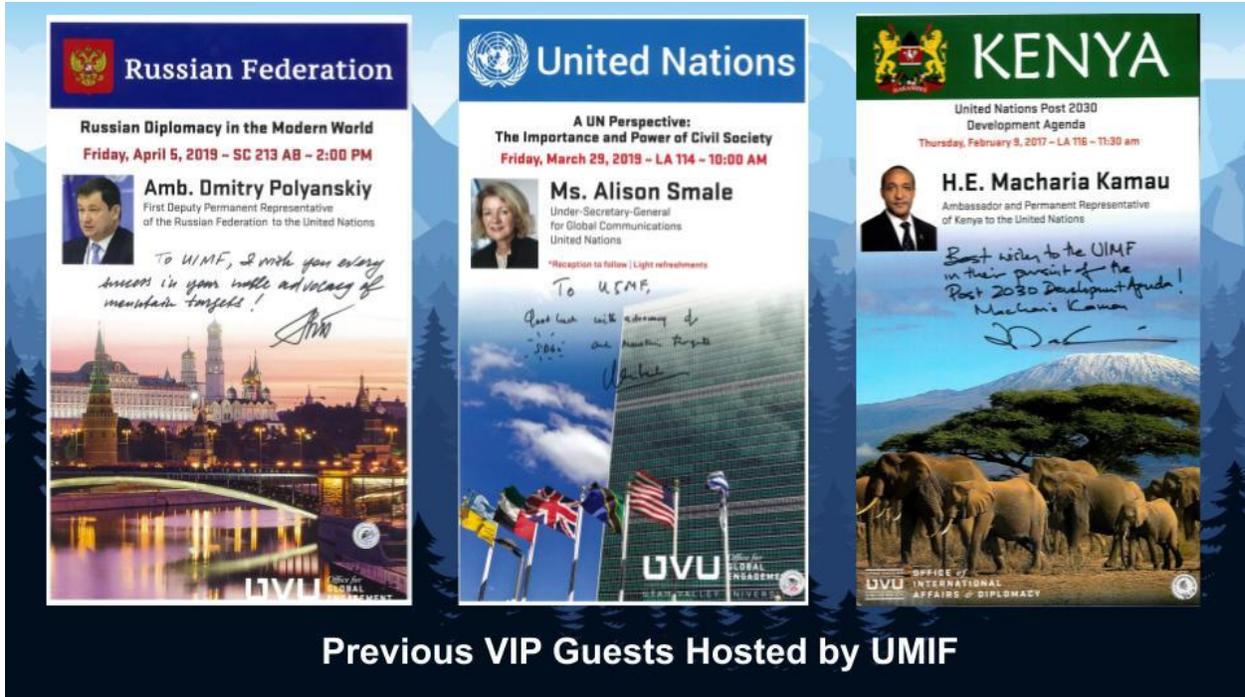


Resolution declaring 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development

The efforts of UIMF has been mentioned in three reports of the UN Secretary-General, once in 2013 for the women of the mountains conference in Peru in 2012, once in 2016 for the Women of the mountains conference in 2015 - addressing the critical issues women and children face in mountainous regions and the outcomes of the 2015 conference, and once more in 2019 for raising global awareness of the issues affecting mountain women at the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held at the United Nations headquarters in March 2018.

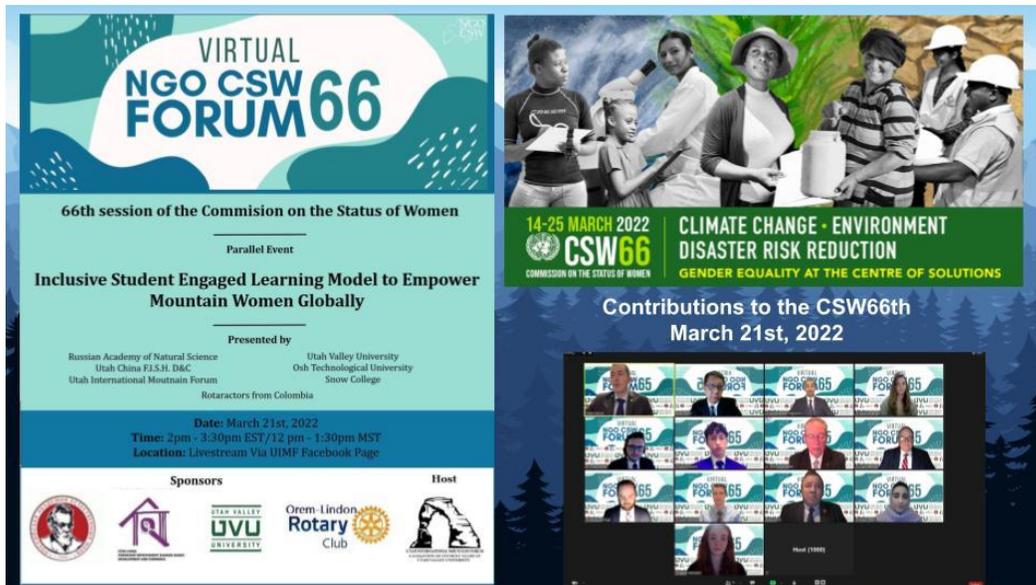
UIMF was also highlighted in two different congressional records for the United States House of Representatives, once was by US Congressman John Curtis and the second was by US Congressman Ben McAdams. Both times were dedicated to our advocacy of mountain women at the United Nations.

Part of our advocacy through the United Nations comes through the written statements we submit in partnership with two Non-government Organizations: the Russian Academy of Natural Science and the Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, both NGO's in consultative status with the United Nations. Students work together over the course of many months to draft a statement advocating for the needs of Mountain regions, in particular mountain women and girls, to be brought into focus of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



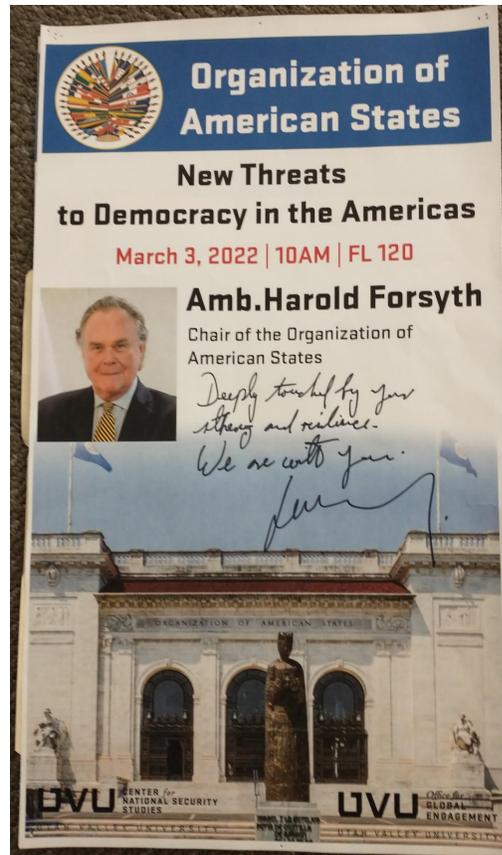
Previous VIP Guests Hosted by UIMF

Through sponsorship of the two NGO's mentioned, UIMF members help host and present a parallel event during the sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women held in New York, United States. I invited him to our UN parallel event on March 21, 2022 at 2 pm EST that focuses on the inclusive SEL method to empower mountain women globally. This even further explains the effects of climate change on mountain communities and how the SEL method can help them gain access to better opportunities, such as education, healthcare, and resources. It also empowers mountain women to become an active voice in local and national policies in regards to climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction.



UIMF Parallel Event to be held March 21st, 2022 for the UN 66th session on the Commission on the Status of Women

I concluded by humbly asked him to help connect us with educational institutions that we can work with to help these families I have come to care about. I am a mom fighting for a better life for my children, just like every other mom in the world. I want to help ease the suffering of children and families in mountain communities, give mountain moms hope and the chance to raise their children without fear. I have been able to take part in amazing opportunities through the student-engaged learning method, and I want to give those same opportunities to other mountain women. As mountain regions, we are stronger together than apart. It is only by working together that we can change lives, bring prosperity and hope to mountain families, and create a better world for our children.



Ambassador Forsyth signs his poster in tribute to our mission to bring a voice to mountain communities

The presentation concluded with the Ambassador thanking us and explaining how deeply touched he was. He was grateful we brought to his attention the challenges of mountain people. He was unaware of the depth of struggles in the mountain regions. He promised to bring this vital problem to his colleagues as this affects all countries apart from the OAS. He plans to create a core group that will help the needs of mountain communities. If he continues on his promise, I am sure it can bring hope and change to many mountain families. I hope this is a step closer to bringing healthcare, education, and safety to these families.

-Alitha Thompson, Vice President of Utah International Mountain Forum and President of Foreign Affairs club