

## *Discussing Comparative Sustainability with the Ambassador of Peru to the OAS*

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, I was able to participate in an event where the UIMF hosted His Excellency, Harold Forsyth, Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. I provided a prepared statement reflecting my research comparing the “equality state” of Wyoming and the country Yemen.



Myself, reading my statement to H.E. Ambassador Forsyth

In preparation for meeting with the ambassador of Peru to the Organization of American States (OAS), the first thing I did was prepare a speech with my professor and mentor. In this preparation, I found that my home state of Wyoming is doing really well at women's rights. The best statistics for Wyoming is that it is ranked 16<sup>th</sup> out of 50 US states for political empowerment. In education and health, Wyoming ranked 31<sup>st</sup>, and in workplace environments, Wyoming ranked 40<sup>th</sup>. I have a passion for Yemen, and I believe we can do more as a global society. I was excited to learn of Tawakkol Karman. She won a Nobel peace prize in 2011 "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work."

Women's rights and full participation in democratic processes are essential to ensure lasting peace. In Yemen, democratic rights are restricted. In 2005, Tawakkol Karman co-founded the group Women Journalists Without Chains to promote freedom of expression and democratic rights. From 2007 to 2010, she regularly led demonstrations and sit-ins in Tahrir Square, Sana'a. She actively participated in the 2011 protests against ruling regimes in many Arab countries. The revolutions of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, and the movement towards processes in other Arab countries such as Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain,

Sudan, and others, in terms of motivation, driving power, and objectives, didn't take place on isolated islands cut off from all the rapid and astonishing developments and changes which our world is witnessing. The Arab people have woken up just to see how poor their share of freedom, democracy, and dignity is. And they revolted. This experience is somewhat similar to the spring that swept throughout Eastern Europe after the downfall of the Soviet Union. The birth of democracies in Eastern Europe was difficult, and victory emerged only after a bitter struggle against existing systems.

Similarly, the Arab world is today witnessing the birth of a new world that tyrants and unjust rulers strive to oppose, but in the end, this new world will inevitably emerge. I cannot help but draw comparisons to Wyoming and Yemen. Wyoming was the 1<sup>st</sup> for women across many sectors and opportunities. See next page on a list of 1<sup>st</sup> that Wyoming was able to accomplish. I do not see why Yemen can not emerge as a regional example for women's suffrage.

Hearing his excellency speak at the end of our statements gave me great hope that the Organization of American States will create a CORE organization of Inter-mountain development. I am also hopeful that this core will place women's suffrage as a part of the core, and his contacts for my research project have been amazing.



*Ambassador Forsyth discusses mountain targets with the UIMF*

#### Wyoming Women's Firsts

1st State or Territory to Grant Universal Suffrage: In 1869, the first Wyoming Territorial Assembly passed the Women's Suffrage Act granting women the right to vote and hold public office, putting them on

equal footing with men. When Wyoming became a state in 1890, this right was written into Article 6 of the new constitution, ensuring universal suffrage.

1st Female Justice of the Peace in the U.S.: Esther Hobart Morris, appointed February 17, 1870, in South Pass City. Her first act after taking office was to charge her predecessor for failing to hand over the court's records to her. She dropped the charges due to her conflict of interest as both plaintiff and judge but kept her own docket book during her term.

1st Women to Serve on a Jury in the U.S.: Laramie, Grand Jury sworn in on March 7, 1870. Women were also sworn in on a Petit Jury in Laramie in April 1870.

1st Female Bailiff in the U.S.: Martha Symons Boies Atkinson was appointed to see to the needs of the first female jurors in 1870 in Laramie.

1st General Election in Which Women Voted: September 6, 1870. Louisa Swain of Laramie cast the first documented vote by a woman in Wyoming. Augusta C. Howe of Cheyenne is said to have been the first in Cheyenne, following Swain by 30 minutes.

1st Presidential Election in Which Women Voted: In 1892, Wyoming was the only state with women's suffrage during that election.

1st Woman Elected to a State-wide Office in Wyoming: Estelle Reel was elected Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1894, the second in the nation following Laura J. Eisenhuth of North Dakota's election in 1892. The reel was the second individual to hold the office in Wyoming.

1st Female Legislator in Wyoming: Mary Godat Bellamy, 1910.

1st Female Mayor in Wyoming: Susan Wissler, Dayton, elected 1911.

1st Town Governed by Women: Dubbed the "petticoat government" by the press, the town of Jackson elected 3 councilwomen, a female town marshal, and a female mayor in 1920. Several of the women were reelected.

1st Female Governor in the U.S.: Nellie Tayloe Ross was elected Governor on November 5, 1924. Although she and Ma Ferguson of Texas were selected on the same day, Ross was inaugurated on January 5, 1925, two weeks before Ferguson, and thus holds the title. Ross' husband, Governor William B. Ross, had passed away suddenly almost exactly one month before she was elected. She did not campaign for herself leading up to the election as she was still in mourning and wore black for much of her term. She ran for re-election in 1926 but narrowly lost to Frank Emerson.

1st Woman Elected to the Eastern Shoshone Tribal Business Council: Irene Kinnear Meade, 1930.

1st Female State Senator: Dora McGrath of Hot Springs County, 1931.

1st Woman Elected to the Northern Arapaho Tribal Business Council: Nellie Scott, 1937.

1st Mixed Jury After Statehood: Sweetwater County, May 8, 1950. According to Cora Beach's Women of Wyoming, Volume I, just after selecting the 1st female jurors in 1870, the lawyers and pundits began to push for a literal reading of the law describing jury qualifications. It had been passed before the act granting women's suffrage and thus specified that the jurors be male. As no one pushed to change the law, the supreme court did not provide a definitive decision, nor was the law changed by the legislature until 1949. Since statehood, the first mixed jury in Wyoming, and thus the 1st female jurors in 80 years, sat the following year, on May 8, 1950.

1st Female State Treasurer: Minnie Mitchell, appointed to fill the unexpired term of her husband, J.R. Mitchell, 1953.

1st Female State Auditor: Minnie Mitchell, 1955

1st Woman Appointed to the Attorney's General Staff: Ellen Crowley, 1956.

1st Female Wyoming Secretary of State: Thyra Thomson, 1963.

1st Female U.S. Congresswoman to represent Wyoming: Barbara Cubin, 1995.

1st Female Wyoming Supreme Court Justice: Justice Marilyn Stebner Kite, 2000. Justice Kite also became the court's first female Chief Justice in 2010.

1st Judicial District Judged Entirely by Women: Laramie County Circuit Court, 2009. Hon. Denise Nau, Hon. Roberta Coates, Hon. Catherine R. Rogers.

1st Female President of the University of Wyoming: Laurie Nichols, 2015

1st female U.S. Army Infantry NCO: Wyoming National Guard Sgt. Shelby Atkins, 2016

**Mr. Stephan Atkinson, UIMF Member**