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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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Empowering Mountain Women Through An Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model

We present a joint educational model which contributes to the priority theme of this session by encouraging students globally to promote gender equality and empower women, girls, and families in the mountain regions of the world.

The Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/77/217](#) from 22 July 2022, states that people in mountain areas worldwide are among the poorest, with half facing food insecurity and limited access to services and infrastructure. Mountain communities are highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and pollution, to name a few. The coronavirus pandemic has further disrupted their livelihoods.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development designated Target 6.6, Target 15.1, and Target 15.4 towards sustainable development in the mountain regions. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/76/129](#) from 28 December 2021, proclaimed 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, providing new opportunities to address challenges faced by mountain communities, women, and girls worldwide in sustaining their livelihoods.

Since 2011, we have partnered with Utah Valley University and academic institutions in the Kyrgyz Republic to create educational programs to promote sustainable development for mountain communities. We assisted Utah Valley University in developing an inclusive, co-curricular, student-engaged learning model that encourages both non-traditional and traditional students to work as a group to advocate for mountain regions with faculty serving as mentors. Non-traditional students are usually over 25 years of age, balancing their education with work and family responsibilities. Many are women and mothers who contribute experiences based on their knowledge as local representatives of mountain communities. The Utah International Mountain Forum, a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University, serves as an extracurricular core of this model. Foreign Affairs, Sustainable Mountain Development, Model United Nations, and Rotaract are leading clubs within the coalition. The curricular part of the model encourages students to participate in club activities and build professional connections between students and mentors.

Through the model, students contribute their own skills, experiences, initiatives/projects, and funds to implement sustainable mountain development while gaining professional skills and recognition from the Mountain Partnership under the Food and Agriculture Organization. The Mountain Partnership coordinates Sustainable Mountain Development activities globally through more than 450 members, including our two institutions and Utah Valley University.

Through the model, the following advocacy achievements were made possible:

- 1) From 2012 to 2022, student coalition members have advocated for adopting and implementing Target 6.6, Target 15.1, and Target 15.4 to ensure global sustainable development for mountain communities. As advocacy efforts, they have, in particular, hosted through the model at Utah Valley University: 1) Co-Chair of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, His Excellency Csaba Korösi on 2 April 2012;
- 2) President of the Economic and Social Council, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations, His Excellency, Martin Sajdik on 12 February 2015;
- 3) President of the United Nations General Assembly, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, His Excellency Peter Thomson on 7 December 2015;
- 4) Co-Chair of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals,

Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, His Excellency, Macharia Kamau on 9 February 2017, and; 5) Under Secretary General for Global Communications, United Nations, Ms. Alison Smale on 29 March 2019. Students also advocated for mountain communities by hosting at the university Permanent Representatives to the United Nations from: 1) Romania, Her Excellency Simona Mirela Miculescu on 26 March 2012; 2) India, His Excellency Hardeep Singh Puri on 15 February 2013; 3) Macedonia, His Excellency, Pajo Avirovikj on 18 March 2013; 4) the Kyrgyz Republic, His Excellency, Talaibek Kydyrov on 22 March 2013; 5) Switzerland, His Excellency, Paul Seger on 25 March, 2013; 6) Greece, His Excellency, Michel Spinellis on 9 June 2014; 7) Romania, His Excellency, Dr. Ion Jinga on 7 October 2015; 8) Germany, His Excellency, Harald Braun on 31 October 2016; 9) Uzbekistan, His Excellency, Bakhtiyor Ibragimov on 5 February 2018; 10) Bosnia & Herzegovina, His Excellency, Milos Vukasinovic on 6 March 2018; 11) Tajikistan, His Excellency, Mahmamin Mahmaminov on 5 October 2018; 12) Austria, His Excellency, Jan Kickert on 19 February 2019, and; 13) Russian Federation, His Excellency, Dmitry Polyanskiy on 5 April 2019. In addition, students advocated for mountain targets by hosting at the university: 1) the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States, His Excellency Muktar Djumaliev, on 3 June 2013, and; 2) Permanent Representative of Peru to the Organization of American States, His Excellency, Harold Forsyth on 3 March 2022.

2) As our major joint initiative to contribute to the sustainable mountain development agenda under the Mountain Partnership through developed educational programs, in 2007, Utah Valley University and the International University of Kyrgyzstan organized the First International Women of the Mountains Conference as an academic forum in Orem, Utah. The Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/62/292](#) from 23 August 2007, featured the conference as a forum for improving mountain women's status globally, and the Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/64/222](#) from 3 August 2009, highlighted its role to establish a regional network on sustainable mountain development and gender issues. The Second International Women of the Mountain Conference was co-hosted by Utah Valley University faculty and 60 students and their partners from the Kyrgyz Republic, in Orem, Utah, on 8 to 9 March 2011. Sustainable Mountain Development in North America: Regional Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in January 2012 highlighted the forum as strengthening the regional approach for advancing Sustainable Mountain Development and gender agendas. The model allowed Utah Valley University faculty and five students to host the Third International Women of the Mountains Conference outside the United States in Puno, Peru, in June 2012. The Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/68/307](#) on 5 August 2013, stated it was a forum gathered by academic institutions from Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic with a focus on mountain communities in the Andean region. As a highlight of the model, the Fourth International Women of the Mountain Conference was held in Orem, Utah, from 7 to 9 October 2015, with student coalition members planning and implementing it over four semesters. The Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/71/256](#) on 29 July 2016 featured the coalition as a host of the conference, which adopted the outcome document observing that Sustainable Development Goal 5 could be achieved by providing women full participation and equal leadership opportunities; implementation of Target 6.6 could be obtained by supporting women's role in the protection of the environment and water sources, and Target 15.1 could be accomplished through the critical role of women in promoting innovation and development.

3) Since 2016, we have involved Utah Valley University students through the model at different forums of the Economic and Social Council on Sustainable Development. Through participation in sessions of the Commission on the Status of

Women, they both advocated for mountain women, and reported on the results of the hosted four International Women of the Mountain conferences. We co-sponsored students' participation at the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2018, when they co-hosted a side and a parallel event. Our written statement [E/CN.6/2018/NGO/37/Rev.1](#) on 20 February 2018 highlighted how the model encourages students to advocate for gender equality and empower women and girls in mountain areas. Utah International Mountain Forum's advocacy campaign for mountain women at the 62nd session was highlighted in the Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/74/209](#) on 22 July 2019. We co-sponsored an oral presentation of students from Utah with advocacy for mountain targets' implementation at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on 19 July 2018. In the written statement [E/2018/NGO/17](#) on 30 May 2018, one of us featured the inclusiveness of the model, allowing both traditional and non-traditional students to advocate for mountain targets implementation. In March 2019, we co-sponsored Utah International Mountain Forum members, including one from Rotaract, participation at the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, when they again hosted a parallel event. In our written statement [E/CN.6/2019/NGO/64](#) on 30 November 2019, we highlighted the model's encouragement of students to empower mountain women and girls through improving public services, social protections, and infrastructure. When we co-sponsored Utah Valley University students' participation at the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2020, they planned to host a parallel event. Although the session was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our written statement [E/CN.6/2020/NGO/91](#) on 30 November 2019 highlighted the student encouragement by the model to advocate for assessing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration for attaining gender equality in mountain regions. In March 2021, we co-sponsored the participation of members from the Utah International Mountain Forum, including five from Rotaract, at the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, when they hosted a virtual parallel event. Our written statement [E/CN.6/2021/NGO/125](#) on 13 December 2020, highlighted the model as an educational initiative allowing students to advocate for equal participation of mountain women and girls in decision-making. In March 2022, we co-sponsored the joint participation of Utah International Mountain Forum members, including seven from Rotaract, and students from Utah Snow College and Osh Technological University from the Kyrgyz Republic at the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, when they hosted a virtual parallel event. Using Internet technologies, students from different mountainous regions around the world effectively participated in United Nations activities, utilizing limited resources. Our written statement [E/CN.6/2022/NGO/141](#) on 13 December 2021 highlighted the critical role of the model in encouraging students from various mountain regions to advocate for gender equality of mountain regions in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs. The inclusive, co-curricular student-engaged learning model developed at Utah Valley University, and the role of non-traditional students in its implementation were highlighted in the Secretary General's Report on Sustainable Mountain Development [A/77/217](#) on 22 July 2022.

The inclusive student-engaged learning model implemented at Utah Valley University, through our support, has empowered all learners to successfully advocate for sustainable mountain development and gender equality in Utah, the Kyrgyz Republic, and globally. It has created a solid foundation to establish similar initiatives for students in the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China and for them all to jointly advocate for sustainable development in their own mountain regions and globally.

The model implements Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality in interaction with Target 4.7, Target 6.6, Target 15.1, and Target 15.4 by ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills required to promote sustainable mountain development through education. It can be implemented by academic institutions worldwide, especially in mountain regions.
