

**Statement**  
**Stephan M. Atkinson (Child)**  
**67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Utah Valley University**

*“Empowering Mountain Women through Inclusive Student-engaged Learning Educational Initiative”*

**March 6 2022**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to speak today on behalf of mountain communities of the State of Utah where I am currently residing and from the State of Wyoming, which I am originally from.

For the past year as President of Utah Valley University Foreign Affairs club, I have been advocating Sustainable Mountain Development or SMD through the student-engaged learning model or SEL. SEL encourages students to solve real-world problems as a group, with a faculty member serving as a mentor.

Members of our club developed skills such as multitasking, working together, networking, and raising funds and in addition, attending monthly Inter-Club Council meetings. We were able to hold fundraisers through club rushes, selling oranges, and then delivering dictionaries and coats for underprivileged kids in schools in Orem. In addition, Foreign Affairs club under my leadership contributed to the SMD advocacy by co-hosting through SEL, the Ambassador from the Kyrgyz Republic to the US and Canada, His Excellency Baktybek Amanbaev. During the visit of the foreign dignitary, we discussed how to strengthen educational programs between UVU and academic institutions in the Kyrgyz Republic with focus on SMD. One of the solutions here was to involve Rotary International members in both states, including Rotaractors. As a highlight of the visit our members held a reception in honor of the Kyrgyz envoy inviting UVU faculty, students, local community representatives and Kyrgyz diaspora in the State of Utah. We even designed a special pin which featured both the Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic flags in a show of bilateral cooperation.

As my great uncle was U.S. Ambassador to Italy, I follow in his footsteps by furthering bilateral ties through education in mountain communities in Kyrgyzstan and worldwide through student-engaged learning.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH