

Ambassador Aida Kasymalieva Presentation at Utah Valley University



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On December 5, 2023, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations, Ambassador Aida Kasymalieva delivered a compelling speech highlighting the progress made over the past five years in fostering the development of mountain regions at Utah Valley University (UVU). The speech shed light on the challenges faced by mountainous countries and the collaborative efforts undertaken to address them. Here is a summary of the key points made by the Ambassador:

Ambassador Kasymalieva began by emphasizing the significance of the Group of Mountain Countries within the UN, comprising 29 nations united by their shared mountainous

landscapes. Drawing attention to the unique geography of Kyrgyzstan, she revealed that a staggering 92% of the country is covered by mountains, with an average elevation exceeding 9,000 feet. Ambassador Kasymalieva recounted the international commitment to recognizing the importance of mountains, citing the 1998 resolution designating 2002 as the "Year of the Mountain" and the subsequent establishment of International Mountain Day.

The speech underscored the critical role mountains play in global ecosystems. With 13% of the world's population residing in mountainous regions, mountains were described as vital repositories of biodiversity, housing 25% of the world's species. Ambassador Kasymalieva emphasized the ecological significance of mountainous forests, responsible for one-third of the world's total forested area, playing a crucial role in preventing erosion and landslides. Furthermore, mountains were highlighted as essential water towers, supporting hydroelectric power and serving as a source of water for downstream regions.

Ambassador Kasymalieva highlighted the pressing issue of climate change, pointing out the alarming trend of melting mountain glaciers and depleting water resources. In response, she announced the upcoming Second Global Mountain Summit scheduled for 2027, emphasizing the need for international cooperation to tackle the challenges posed by climate change in mountainous areas.

A notable mention in the speech was the University of Utah Valley's pioneering initiative in 2006 as the first university to join the Mountain Partnership Initiative, indicating a growing global awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development in academic institutions. UVU has been at the forefront on the issue of sustainable mountain development, partly due to the University's geographic location in a mountainous region.

The collaborative efforts between legislative members of Utah and Kyrgyzstan were also highlighted as a commendable example of international cooperation. The ambassador emphasized their joint commitment to sustainable mountain development, showcasing how nations with distinct mountainous terrains can work together to address common challenges.

Ambassador Kasymalieva concluded the speech by focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment in mountainous regions. She highlighted the International Women of the Mountains Conference, emphasizing the need to ensure that women in these areas are active participants in and beneficiaries of sustainable development initiatives.

In summary, Ambassador Kasymalieva's speech highlighted the global significance of mountainous regions, the threats posed by climate change, and the collaborative efforts needed to address these challenges. The emphasis on sustainable development, international cooperation, and gender equality underscored the commitment and future collaboration between UVU, the greater Utah community, and the people of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Jacob Carlson, Utah Valley University student