

My Contribution to the 14th International Mountain Day Celebration at Utah Valley University



Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations, Ambassador Aida Kasymalieva speaks before faculty and students at Utah Valley University

On December 5th, 2023, I had the pleasure of attending and contributing to the 14th International Mountain Day (IMD) celebration at Utah Valley University (UVU), hosted by the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU. This gathering holds a special place in my heart. My connection to this event is important and personal, as I come from a country where the landscape is overwhelmingly mountainous. It is remarkable that 93% of my homeland is adorned with mountains that not only define our geographical landscape but also profoundly shape our cultural identity, traditions, and way of life.

The opening speech was delivered by Aida Kasymalieva, the Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations. Ambassador Aida Kasymalieva spoke on the Kyrgyz Republic's efforts to advance sustainable mountain development (SMD) on a global scale. She highlighted the ongoing activities at the United Nations related to the promotion of SMD, focusing on the progress and implementation of previously passed resolutions pertaining to mountainous regions.

The following address was made by Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, UVU faculty and mentor for the UIMF. He spoke about the role of the IMD as educational program to raise awareness of students in SMD and learn how to work jointly on the implementation of SMD initiatives through a student-engaged learning (SEL) program. SEL was implemented in 2011 and since then it encourages students to observe IMD annually on December 11th.

The next presentation was delivered by Congressman Joseph Pitts, whose contribution to Kyrgyz-American relations is very high, as he shared important insights into our relationship. He also mentioned the opportunities for students at Asbury University to be involved in the activities of UVU students and stressed the importance of steps we,

members of joint student team are taking to advocate for protection of women's rights and develop mountain regions, and especially in preparations for our joint participation at the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) at the UN in March 2024.



UVU faculty and students in the audience

I had the privilege of delivering the next speech, focusing on the vital role of empowering women globally and in the Kyrgyz Republic, drawing from my experiences as the ex-president of the Rotaract Nomad Club of Bishkek. Our club, established in 2017 by the Rotary Club of Bishkek, has been active in various fields, carrying out numerous projects, both locally and internationally. We dedicate all the proceeds from these projects to charitable causes, supporting single mothers, orphans, and large families. Afterwards, I highlighted the vibrant club activities and introduced Aidana Nurlanova, the dedicated Vice President of the Rotaract in Bishkek, who plays a crucial role in driving our community initiatives forward.

Dr. Atabekov Almaz and Tatiana Panfilenko, from OshTU, highlighted the successful implementation of the SEL model in Kyrgyz Republic. Their testimonies reflected the positive outcomes of collaboration with UVU, contributing to the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development Goals.

This year's IMD celebration was particularly poignant for me, given the growing challenges faced by mountainous regions worldwide. The impact of climate change on mountain livelihoods looms large, casting a shadow over these natural wonders. Mountain glaciers, once steadfast and unyielding, are now succumbing to the relentless march of global warming, leading to a distressing depletion of vital water resources.

I often visit the state of Utah and am very glad to see the multifaceted development of relations between the Kyrgyz Republic and Utah. It's exciting for me to see how these ties have developed over time, fostering mutual growth and understanding.



Visit of the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States, Baktybek Amanbaev, to Utah Valley University in September 2023

A highlight of my involvement in the IMD celebration was the opportunity to participate in a Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model. This innovative approach allows students to tackle critical issues in a collaborative setting, under the guidance of mentors in the field.

Specifically, we've focused on advocating for women's empowerment within the context of sustainable mountain development at the United Nations. As my contribution to the IMD, I organized a zoom call, recording the entire session to document our collaboration and later added captions for accessibility. This experience not only substantially contributed to the cause but also enhanced my skills in zoom recording, multitasking, and effective group collaboration, serving as a practical learning opportunity for today's digital and collaborative work environments.

The event also provided a valuable opportunity to learn from various speakers about the 'Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions' 2023-2027, an initiative presented by the Kyrgyz Republic and Italy at the UN. The insights shared by these speakers have inspired me, offering new perspectives on how I can further contribute to the global movement for women's empowerment and development of mountain regions.



A copy of the brochure for the IMD observation and a photo of Dastan Abikov

Reflecting on the day's events, I am filled with gratitude for the chance to be part of the International Mountain Day celebrations. It's a reminder of

the ongoing need to advocate for our mountains and the communities that depend on them.

Dastan Abikov, Past President of the Rotaract Nomad Club of Bishkek