

# STATEMENT

Mike Rich

Orem-Lindon Rotary Club

69<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Side Event

*The Kyrgyz Republic – State of Utah advocacy to empower mountain women and girls through ethically good student-centric education*

March 11, 2025

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Mike Rich and I'm the president of the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club. I would like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Aida Kasymalieva for inviting me to this important event during the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the **Commission on the Status of Women**. Members of the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club are proud to contribute to the educational partnership between the Kyrgyz Republic and the State of Utah, in particular through the Utah Valley University.

One of the reasons is that among our members we have Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev and Dr. Cholpon Akmatalieva, who are former diplomats, originally from the Kyrgyz Republic, and they are currently teaching at Utah Valley University now.

In 2023, twice, we hosted Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States and Canada, Baktybek Amanbaev. We also were honored to greet and interact with Ambassador Aida Kasymalieva at the UVU campus in December 2023 during the observation of the **United Nations International Mountain Day**.

Our club, and Utah District Rotarians in alignment with our traditional seven goals of Rotary International, are involved in activities which focus on sustainable mountain development and I know that this specific agenda at the United Nations is pursued by the Kyrgyz Republic. Mountainous State of Utah has many similarities to the Kyrgyz Republic allowing us to share similar experiences with our friends from the Kyrgyz Republic.

We are glad that UVU provides a solid foundation for educational partnership with the Kyrgyz Republic. Its focus on students' involvement in this partnership through hands-on activities, which is similar to a service-learning, make a big difference for student career advancement. Developed at UVU, student-engaged learning model relies on a coalition of student clubs named the **Utah International Mountain Forum**. It includes a UVU Rotaract, which is a student club for Rotary International.

We have now a tradition for our Rotarians to involve UVU Rotaractors in various service projects for local mountain communities in the Utah county. They contribute to the beautification of local parks and cities, raising funds to purchase coats for children in local elementary schools, and being part of the traditional Orem Pancake Breakfast to feed local community members every June. We Rotarians are now closely involved with the UVU Rotaractors' joint initiatives with their peers from the Kyrgyz Republic. Initiatives like **World Polio Day** in October or **International Mountain Day** observations in December are hosted by UVU Rotaractors together with their peers from Kyrgyz Republic.

We also glad to support UVU Rotaractors annual visits to the United Nations to speak here in support of the mountain communities in both State of Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic. They always do this together with their peers from the Kyrgyz Republic. Today's event follows the same path of celebrating together our mountain family's role in empowerment of women, and jointly discussing how to deal with some of the same challenges for them such as from emerging threats like the climate change, and outmigration among others.

UVU Rotaract was recognized as the best club by the Utah Rotary district in 2022 and 2023. This was a result of the successful joint advocacy campaign for mountain women of UVU Rotaractors with their peers from Osh Technological University during the 65<sup>th</sup> and 67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Our club was very proud for our colleagues and partners from Rotaract clubs.

We are excited to continue to work together to further build ties with Rotarians from the Kyrgyz Republic, with UVU Rotaractors leading us in this endeavor. And I am glad to be with you all today as we are jointly celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our partnership.

Thank you very much.