

STATEMENT
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70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Parallel Event
Raising Justice Awareness of Mountain Women Through Student-Engaged Learning
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Good afternoon, My name is Antoine Mwamba, and I am an international student from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) at Utah Valley University (UVU). As I would like to advance in my career path by working at the United Nations, I stand before you now to add my voice for women whose calls for justice are often silenced by geography, conflict, and policies, especially mountain women around the world, and in the DRC in particular. It is essential that mountain women are included in the final document of this session.

Mountain regions provide water, food, natural resources and cultural heritage to millions of people. Mountain women cultivate lands, care for families, and preserve traditions but often these environments are shaped by isolation, poverty and insecurity. Their right to safety, dignity and legal protection must not depend on their distance from access to resources. Justice must climb the mountain. In eastern Congo, because of mountainous terrain and ongoing conflict women often struggle to reach police stations, courts or medical centers. Sexual violence has been used as a weapon, and weak legal systems make justice difficult to obtain. In 2025 the Muzenze prison in the DRC 150 women were reportedly raped and killed. This shows extreme risks mountain women face. This demonstrates also why mountain women must be included in the CSW70 final document.

My advocacy is based on UVU's Student-Engaged Learning (SEL) model. This inclusive approach brings together traditional and non-traditional students in collaborative, mentored projects by connecting academic study with real community needs. Through SEL I have assembled hygiene kits for Tabitha's Way in Utah County, raised funds to provide coats for needy school children, hosted and photographed International Mountain Day, and World Polio Day at UVU, to have a platform for mountain women. These experiences demonstrate how SEL can strengthen communities while advancing global awareness.

I am sincerely grateful to UVU for supporting our civic engagement and to the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club for encouraging our advocacy and services to mountain communities. These partnerships show that sustainable development begins with collaboration between educational institutions and community organizations.

In closing, I urge this session and educational institutions in particular rural areas to adopt inclusive, student-centered engagement models similar to the SEL model. It empowers students to contribute meaningfully to sustainable mountain development and women's rights. I also call for practical measures, including mobile justice units in the mountainous provinces of the DRC, so that no woman is denied protection because of geography. Thank you!