

## **STATEMENT**

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**Utah Valley University**

**70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**Parallel Event**

**Raising Justice Awareness of Mountain Women Through Student-Engaged Learning**

**March 10, 2026**

Ladies and Gentlemen, My name is LOUYOKO NIANZA, a Political Science and International Relations student at Utah Valley University (UVU) , and President of Smart-Africaine NGO

It's a real pleasure to speak for the third time at the session of the CSW and as before, I would like to urge this forum to include mountain women and girls in its final document.

Mountain regions supply freshwater to billions of people, feed major rivers, and store snow and ice that regulate water flow. They host rich biodiversity, act as carbon sinks, and support agriculture with key crops like wheat and potatoes. Mountain women are essential to food security and community resilience, yet they face limited access to education, healthcare, justice and decision-making. In conflict-affected mountain regions such as eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan, many women and girls endure displacement, and violence. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and equal justice requires recognizing them as key partners in peace and development.

Education plays an important role in women's empowerment. I know this from my own life here now in Utah. UVU's Student-Engaged Learning (SEL) model engages my peers and me in hands-on activities and services as a group to resolve problems challenging mountain communities with our teacher mentoring us. Through Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU with Smart-Africaine NGO, my peers and I partnered with the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club to serve at Tabitha's Way Local Food Pantry, to raise funds for buying coats for needy local children in Utah County.

Similarly, as a student researcher at the Gary R. Herbert Institute of Public Policy, I apply the Student-Engaged Learning model to analyze how governance and trade policies among mountain communities in Switzerland, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo affect vulnerable populations, particularly mountain women, and translate that research into evidence-based, actionable policy recommendations that promote inclusive and sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to conclude, I once more urge the UN to empower mountain women and girls by ensuring that their voices shape CSW70's final document and beyond. Thanks