

## **STATEMENT**

**Mike Lutz**

**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**

Distinguished delegates and honored guests,

My name is Michael Lutz, a Political Science student at Utah Valley University. It is a privilege to address the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I am here to advocate for the explicit inclusion of mountain women and girls in the final outcome document of CSW70.

This cause is personal for me. I grew up in a mountain community of 80 people outside Springville, Utah. We were often overlooked for resources and representation. That experience taught me that geography determines opportunity. I later witnessed this internationally in the Republic of Kiribati, where environmental vulnerability and rising sea levels threaten entire communities. Seeing how climate change places a disproportionate strain on families in fragile environments deepened my understanding that environmental insecurity and gender inequality are inseparable.

Mountain women confront this invisibility every day. Despite their global importance, they face reduced access to healthcare, education, and political representation. They are central to food security and water management, yet climate change erodes their livelihoods. Without explicit language in the CSW70 outcome document, implementation efforts will continue to overlook those in remote areas.

Through UVU's Student Engaged Learning model, I have seen how education empowers non-traditional students like myself. As a 29-year-old supporting a family, I have used the Utah International Mountain Forum to conduct research tied to UN frameworks. This model works because it places students inside global governance. My research on Switzerland shows that even in prosperous nations, women in rural alpine cantons face limited representation. Injustice is evident in education, where university-track graduation rates drop from 34 percent in urban Geneva to just 13 percent in alpine Uri. Strong national systems do not automatically eliminate geographic disparities.

I respectfully recommend that CSW70 explicitly recognize mountain women and girls. I also encourage student-centric educational models that connect research and global governance. Sustainable mountain development and gender equality are inseparable. Our policies must reflect that reality.

Thank you.