

STATEMENT
Roland Kabongo

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

Hello everyone, my name is Roland Kabongo. I'm originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a member of Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) at Utah Valley University (UVU) where I study Technology Management and public law in Utah. And even though these two places are thousands of miles apart, I've come to realize that they share something powerful, something that has shaped who I am. They are both mountain communities with an important role of families, women and girls.

Back home in the DRC, the mountains are places of strength, culture, and resilience for local mountain communities. The Virunga Mountains, the highlands of Kivu are places where local communities including women and girls have learned to endure hardship, protect their land, and rebuild again and again. Growing up around those mountain regions has taught me and the women in these regions what it means to stand tall even when life is difficult. When I moved to Utah, the moment I saw the Wasatch Range mountains, they carried a different history, a different climate, a different culture. But the spirit is surprisingly similar. Women and girls here value nature, community, and the idea of pushing yourself to climb higher, both literally and in life.

My education at UVU has emphasized to me who I am and where I come from. My involvement in the programs of the UVU student clubs coalition named the Utah International Mountain Forum taught me how to work together with other students including local women and girls on solving problems of local mountain communities. They remind me that no matter where we live, mountain families, women include rising above challenges, and to keep moving forward. Through this model named student-engaged learning and partnership with local Rotarians, our team and myself learned how to serve local women and girls by raising money to buy coats for students in local elementary schools or to assemble kits for women for local charity groups in Utah County.

So when I think about my journey from the DRC to Utah, I see that such hands-on, experiential, service-focused education can help to empower women and girls in Africa as well. I ask this session organizers and participants to promote the use of such programs and include mountain women in the discussions and decisions made at the UN.

Thank you



BIO PLUS PHOTO

Roland Kayenga Kabongo was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where he spent his formative years surrounded by the rich cultural, linguistic, and social diversity that characterizes the country. Growing up in the DRC shaped his worldview, instilling in him a strong sense of community, resilience, and a desire to contribute meaningfully to society. These early experiences later influenced both his academic interests and his professional aspirations. Roland eventually relocated to the United States to pursue higher education in Technology Management, Political Science, and enrolling at Utah Valley University (UVU). At UVU, he embarked on a multidisciplinary academic journey that reflects his broad interests in both technology and governance. This combination of fields demonstrates Roland's commitment to understanding not only how technology shapes modern organizations but also how public policy, law, and governance influence society. His academic focus positions him at the intersection of technology, leadership, and public service.