Side Event

World Trade Organization
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Empowering Mountain and Landlocked Communities Through Trade Facilitation, Market Access, and Student-Centric Learning: Lessons from the Kyrgyz Republic and the State of Utah, United States

STATEMENT

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I would like to thank the World Trade Organization and Dr. Maksutov for giving us an opportunity to demonstrate Utah Valley University's (UVU) Student Engaged Learning Model (SEL) in action. My name is Domenic Maximus Callor, and as a Global Relations student at UVU, I stand before you representing a generation of non-traditional and traditional student-advocates. Under this student lead model, my peers and I work together as a group to solve local community problems under our teachers' mentorship. Through SEL, I have served as Vice President of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) and the Foreign Affairs Club, collaborated with the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club, and recently advocated for mountain women at the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70).

I was born in the mountains of Utah, and my heritage lies in the mountains of Italy. While mountain communities provide critical global assets, they remain systemically underrepresented in global governance. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has found that the 54% of land mass that is mountainous in Italy struggle with outmigration due to isolation and they are vulnerable to climate induced disasters, evident in 40 deaths this winter alone coming from avalanches. Mountain Partnership (MP) is the world's leading advocate for SMD headquartered in Rome, Italy. Through the Mountain Partnership Product Initiative (MPPI) 48 certified mountain goods have risen in value within the international market. The MP contributed to the advancements of local communities through the *Fashion For Fragile Ecosystems* at the Milan Fashion Week and UVU has

contributed to sustainable mountain development under the umbrella of the MP for 20 years now.

I have been studying how AI-assisted environmental monitoring and drone-based search-and-rescue infrastructure developed in Italy have been mitigating risks in the Italian Alps. These technologies are strengthening disaster preparedness, protecting critical infrastructure, and saving lives in mountain regions already. The great leaps Italy has seen in protecting and saving lives in the mountains with new technological advancements can be a global resource if correctly shared with those countries and organizations within the MP including the state of Utah and UVU. As an official member of the partnership I give thanks to the WTO for endeavoring to eliminate tariffs on environmental goods and streamlining the open trade of emergency relief technology.

Through the SEL model, we will also be attending the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York next week. The focus of this opportunity is to study the Voluntary National Review's (VNR) of our assigned states. An analysis of Italy's 2026 VNR underscores the urgency of formalized mountain policy. Their VNR highlights a progressive approach to multilevel governance while pioneering Europe's first Youth Voluntary Review though it says very little regarding the development of their mountain communities.

The State of Utah offers a good model of expanding SMD through its trade facilitation and market access. We demonstrate also through student-centric learning, how academic institutions elsewhere could also benefit from using inclusive, student-driven education that ensures that young leaders in the mountain communities are included in shaping their own sustainable futures.