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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Aloha, my name is Janessa- Michelle Purcell, and I am the senior mentor of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU).

I would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Nurbek Maksutov and other WTO leaders for hosting this timely side event featuring us students as contributors to the discourse about free trade impact on LLDS and mountain states.

It is a privilege for me to speak as a mentor with our professor Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev. Today's event will demonstrate the Student-Engaged Learning (SEL) model in action. You will see how it encourages students to work together to host this event, while also solving real problems in their advocacy efforts for mountain communities, with faculty mentorship.

This year, our university commemorates the 20th anniversary of joining the United Nations Mountain Partnership, and UIMF celebrates its 15th anniversary. We are proud to have contributed to the efforts of the Mountain Partnership to have Target 6.6, Target 15.1 and Target 15.4 to be adopted, included and implemented amongst the 17 sustainable development goals.

Our contributions include, the first UIMF President John McClure participated in the RIO+20 summit in 2012, which discussed the necessity to adopt the SDGs. Jesler Molina in 2013, spoke in support of the mountain targets at the Open Working Group on the SDGs in New York. In October 2015, Tony Medina led the UIMF team in making the preparations within four semesters to organize and host

the International Women of the Mountains Conference at UVU. Graciously, UIMF's consistent efforts have been recognized. In July 2016, the United Nations secretary General's report on the Sustainable Mountain Development A / / highlighted UIMF for successfully hosting this gender-focused event.

As a woman of Pacific Islander heritage, born and raised on a mountainous island, we hold the responsibility of educating future generations to come. Yet, we as mountain women are isolated and underrepresented. This has been evident with the exclusion of mountain women in the final document of any session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to date. Nonetheless, from these efforts we have learned about the importance of working with member states in decision-making at the UN, evidenced by the important roles of women and girls in decision making and sustainable development.

In the application of SEL, we as students have been able to apply lessons learned in the classroom into our communities to advance the SDGs in Utah. I led the UIMF team in serving the local community, in various service engagements in partnership with the Orem- Lindon Rotarians and the Hope4Orem Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Organization, in efforts to encourage accessible resources for all.

Through SEL each of us study certain aspects of SMD in the state of Utah or other mountain states. Last year, I studied with my colleague, McKay Jones, the Air Pollution problem in West Salt Lake to identify the main pollution contributors. We determined that because of the market principles and free trade - based economy in Utah, many major state polluters are concentrated on the west side of the I-15 federal highway, which has increased health issues and illnesses for local residents.

This year, I have been analyzing the Voluntary National Review of the islands of Saint Nevis & Kitts, indicates progress toward increasing access to clean water for its citizens, as has the VNR of the Kingdom of Tonga, exemplified through their improvement of infrastructure and resource management to expand access to safe water and sanitation. These small islands have been making great strides in incorporating the SDGs to increase the quality of life for their communities and are models of good sustainable development.

I thank Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN Aida Kasymalieva for providing an opportunity for UIMF, myself, and students from Osh Technological University to advocate for mountain women during the side events at the 68th, 69th and 70th sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. Our joint Utah-Kyrgyz Republic team was recognized for the promotion of the mountain women rights in the 2023-2025 UN Secretary General's report on Sustainable Mountain Development. It was also an honor for me to host Ambassador Michelle Sison, the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs at UVU on October 24, 2024, when she praised UIMF for promoting mountain women's rights at CSW.

The work of my colleagues and I is not done, but we express gratitude for the advancements thus far, and hope to continue this work moving forward.

Thank you.