

International Forum on Diplomatic Training 48th Annual Meeting “Diplomacy for Development”

Hosted by the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service
New Delhi, 14 – 18 November 2022

14 November

Welcome Dinner, with address from Chief Guest, Secretary (Economic Relations), Mr Dammu Ravi

15 November

Welcome Remarks by Dean, Mr Sanjiv Ranjan, Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service

Introductory Remarks by IFDT Co-Chairs:

- Dr Barbara Bodine, Edmund A Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, USA
- Ambassador Emil Brix, Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Austria

Keynote address by Secretary (Economic Relations), Mr Dammu Ravi

1. Mr Ravi stressed that the underlying theme of this conference, which coincides with the 75th anniversary of India's independence and sets the scene for India's G20 Presidency, is how to prepare diplomats for the challenges of the 21st century. The key role of global cooperation requires some reorientation; states should no longer think of national interests first, but need to see humanity as one, in order to address global challenges effectively. National interests will be promoted by working internationally to address inequalities; hence development should be at the heart of diplomacy.

Group photo

Panel 1: Diplomat's Toolkit: How to equip diplomats of today for the challenges of tomorrow?

Moderator: Dr Sumit Seth, Joint Secretary (PP&R), Ministry of External Affairs, India (SS)

Panellists:

Ms Rachel Kyte, Dean, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (RK)

Mr Pankaj Saran, Former Deputy National Security Adviser of India, Former Ambassador of India to the Russian Federation (PS)

Mr Nikhil Seth, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Executive Director, UNITAR (NS)

Dr Kyung Eun-Young, Director, Foreign Language Training Division, Korean National Diplomatic Academy (KEY)

2. RK and the other panellists stressed that tomorrow's diplomats need to be dexterous, multilaterally as well as bilaterally, and equipped to search for new solutions outside the traditional intergovernmental space, including at the intersection between business and finance and human security. Understanding of global, rather than merely bilateral, challenges is crucial.
3. Students have to be equipped for peripatetic careers, moving in and out of public and private sectors. They need to be nimble, intellectually curious and have the sophistry to understand new developments. They are increasingly calling for knowledge in new areas – such as data management, AI ethics, geoengineering, management of disinformation – in parallel with traditional diplomatic tradecraft.
4. Mid- and late- career training is essential, and we need to think of new ways of providing this: post-pandemic, there is demand for short bursts of training brought to people in their workplace, rather than taking them out of work for training periods. New skills and knowledge are important: digital skills, knowledge of digital diplomacy, science diplomacy, etc. The digital revolution is a great democratising force: it enables small states and non-state actors to have louder diplomatic voices.
5. In NS' view, pedagogy has undergone a sea change: as people no longer read books but take in information in short bursts, we should recalibrate how to impart knowledge, how to guide them to the best available information. KEY explained how in her diplomatic academy, there is no internet connectivity and no technology is allowed in class.
6. All agreed that a greater gender balance is important, in providing not only representation but more female perspectives in diplomacy and international leadership.
7. Diplomats need broader networks than in the past: not only with traditional diplomatic actors, but with a wide range of actors. Also, diplomats now need to be well networked within domestic government systems: just as the 2008 financial crisis turned finance ministries into diplomats, so domestic ministries are increasingly working with diplomats on the international stage.
8. Language ability remains an important skill for diplomats. KEY explained how Korea provides a 5 week intensive English programme for all new diplomats, building on the very high levels of English with which they all arrive. The learning is through case studies; for example they might spend a few days debating the Ethiopian civil war. By playing the roles of panellists and moderator, diplomats not only improve their language skills and specialised vocabulary, but also their analytical skills and preparedness to assume diplomatic roles. While technology is increasingly providing automated translation skills, it will never provide the all-round listening and societal understanding obtained through human language skills.
9. There was some discussion of the changing capacities of newly-arrived diplomats, and concern that in some countries the lure of the private sector may mean that diplomatic recruits are not as strong as in the past. One panellist observed that repeated public and political criticism of civil servants in some countries has had a negative impact on recruitment. But despite these challenges, the call to public service is profound in the new generation, because of concern about convergence of multiple crises.

Panel 2: From Aspirations to Achievements: Building partnerships for comprehensive development

Moderator: *Dr Shamika Ravi, Former Member, PM's Economic Advisory Council, India (SR)*

Panellists:

Mr Akira Muto, Director General, Foreign Service Training Institute, Japan (AM)

Mr Hideki Mori, Operations Manager for India, World Bank (HM)

Mr Sridharan Madhusudhanan, Joint Secretary (DPA-I), Ministry of External Affairs, India (SM)

10. All the panellists stressed the vital importance of partnerships with the private sector for development today. For example, and in the context of Japanese creation of a hydrogen-powered society domestically, Japanese company Mitsubishi is working with the California authorities on the transition from coal to hydrogen. As a further example, Japanese companies are collaborating with some of the world's largest ports, including Mumbai, to build hydrogen-powered ports. Diplomats are involved in these collaborations.
11. The panellists stressed that diplomats working on development need the skills to be able to listen carefully to what partners are asking for, and to be involved in project planning with them, right from the outset. Project delivery should be tailored to what people need, and then diplomats should remain involved for several years post-implementation to ensure the project outcome survives and flourishes.
12. SM noted that there is currently no compendium of global development partnership initiatives on development projects, a gap that should be filled.
13. HM said that development partnerships are changing: government finance is limited and donations to institutions such as the World Bank have slowed post-Covid, so institutions have to think more creatively about partnerships with the private sector. Consequently, diplomatic training should involve more collaboration with the private sector too.
14. In response to a question, all the panellists agreed that climate change is vitally important. It is a key priority for the World Bank, with focus both on limitation (phasing out fossil fuels etc) and mitigation (supporting emergency response and resilience). Climate change forms a core element of the Indian MEA's development-related decision-making and of Japanese policies.
15. On the role of diplomacy in deciding upon development projects, the panellists agreed that it is for development partners to make their own choices on the establishment of projects, taking into account factors such as climate change implications. Organisations like the World Bank work to ensure that local partners have strong evidence, analysis and proposals on which to base their decision-making; but project establishment decisions are for partners. In development, empathy is vital: to work effectively with partner countries and peoples, diplomats must first gain a deep understanding of their perspectives.
16. As regards current challenges, the World Bank is aiming to give maximum possible support to Ukraine: since the war began, it has begun more projects there than in any other country. To face upcoming global recession, human resilience is key, just as with the Covid pandemic: to cope with what is coming and take steps to mitigate it where possible. It was also stressed that, in the current global context, it's important that diplomacy focus on reconfirming international commitment to the rule of law. And cooperation between world leaders is vital, so that they have common ground on which to address global challenges even if current global institutions don't survive.

Working lunch

Panel 3: One Health: Synergizing regional and global efforts for achieving optimal health outcomes in a post-pandemic world

Moderator: Mr Satish Sivan, Joint Secretary (DPA-III), Ministry of External Affairs, India (SSi)

Panellists:

Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, World Health Organisation (Virtual) (SSw)

Mr Shah Ahmed Shafi, Director General, Foreign Service Academy, Bangladesh (SAS)

Mr Emil Brix, Director, Vienna School of International Studies & IFDT Co-chair (EB)

17. SSi described India's Covid response and its international vaccine distribution programme. SAS discussed Bangladesh's national experience and the international support they had sought, successfully, to manage the pandemic.
18. EB commented that the pandemic demonstrated (a) the challenges of managing a problem where you don't know what will happen, and experts disagree; (b) that pandemic nationalism, although unfortunate, is unavoidable; (c) new Covid/pandemic diplomacies and alliances, and the ways in which general foreign policy affects pandemic response (for example, anti-Russia feelings have led to only around 70 countries accepting the Sputnik vaccine despite its apparently high quality); (d) the need for reform of WHO, as it can't be right that one country can prevent WHO from calling a disease a pandemic for many weeks; and (e) the need for discussion of relationships between public and private donors and WHO.
19. SSw explained the importance of One Health: a multi-disciplinary approach overcoming boundaries between human and animal health and the environment. She called for both national and global preparedness, involving both a strong health surveillance system and processes for effective, science-based decision-making. She called for better implementation of the preparedness provisions of the International Health Regulations, noting that WHO has now set up a Universal Preparedness Review on a similar model to Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council. WHO is building a technology transfer programme, for efficient tech sharing that's not driven by corporate profits. She called for WHO to be empowered to inspect and do local research, accompanied by accountability.
20. SSw said that next time, weeks should not be lost at the start: the world needs to take early measures to prevent any new illness from becoming a pandemic. This means considering measures such as travel restrictions at an early stage; yet recognising that proclaiming a new disease has negative financial consequences for the state which does so (as South Africa found to its cost when it identified the Omicron variant of Covid).
21. Pandemic nationalism may be inevitable, but it has negative consequences. It's recently been estimated that a million lives could have been saved in 2021 if vaccines had been more fairly distributed. The panel agreed that we need to tackle areas where national interests – e.g. in intellectual property rights – have negative consequences on global interests. Per a traditional proverb: "If you go alone, you can go fast; but if you go with others, you can go far".
22. SSw observed that overall, countries where there's high trust in government, and between sections of society, did better in pandemic management. Where there's a lack of trust (e.g. due to high corruption), communities are less rigorous in following government advice, and so suffered.

Outbreaks begin and end in communities, so community resilience and community-based primary health care are vital.

23. EB called for more diplomatic training in this field, to enable better sharing of good practice and better reliance on science. Every diplomatic training academy should offer modules on health diplomacy, and every foreign ministry should have a global health department or focal point.
24. All agreed that, as the Covid pandemic recedes, we should not forget its lessons nor forget to invest in preparedness for future pandemics, which are likely to happen with increasing frequency.

Panel 4: Negotiating for an inclusive, sustainable and resilient world

Moderator: Mr Ron Ton, Director, Clingendael Academy, Netherlands (RT)

Panellists:

Ms Sujata Mehta, Former Member of the Union Public Service Commission, Former Ambassador of India to Spain (SM)

Ms Pamela J. Deen, Director General, Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute, Sri Lanka (PJD)

Mr D. Bala Venkatesh Varma, Former Ambassador of India to the Russian Federation (DBVV)

25. All the panellists have experience of negotiation and of teaching negotiation: the question is how to ensure negotiation techniques and methodologies are adequate to tackle today's global issues. Experience has shown that virtual negotiations are less effective, because of the importance of body language, tone etc. Inclusivity, sustainability and resilience are important, both to define successful negotiations, and for their outcomes to be enduring. Where there is no broad consensus, the outcome of a negotiation is unlikely to be of long-term value.
26. For example, the Millennium Development Goals were of unknown origin, had little buy in globally, and so had little real world impact. In contrast, the Sustainable Development Goal negotiation process was much broader, and its outcomes are positive, practical and widely accepted. The contrast between the MDGs and SDGs provides a useful example of the importance of inclusivity in generating sustainability and resilience.
27. Success in negotiation requires clarity of objectives, and an outcome that is justifiable in light of those objectives. It has to be clear to all sides that a cost-free outcome is not possible, and if reached may not be sustainable and resilient: there has to be give and take on all sides.
28. Negotiations should be away from glare of floodlights; but with an eye to what's being said publicly. The BATNA approach, used widely in business, isn't necessarily possible for important global discussions, for example on climate change. As to whether deadlines are useful: they may force an outcome, but there's a risk that it's a weak outcome.
29. Being a good negotiator entails (1) representation; (2) access at high levels; (3) knowing your own country's priorities and interests, below the waterline; and (4) knowing the possibilities and limits of the negotiation. A good negotiator also needs strong personal qualities: (1) sound judgement, (2) a balanced outlook, (3) self-discipline in how they conduct themselves and manage policy, (4) capacity to understand the other side well, having open eyes, ears and mind. In parallel with diplomatic and negotiation skills, reinforced by career-long training, subject matter expertise will also be needed as relevant (possibly by bringing in experts to the ministry at mid-career stage).

30. The panel stressed the importance of mutual respect for cultural and religious factors in negotiation. At the same time, it was observed that while globally there's a common hardware to negotiations (Embassies/High Commissions, negotiation structures, etc), the software has diversified for the better. Governments can no longer impose a rigid perception of interests and priorities at the UN. There's now more sensitivity to regional and cultural differences, and more scope for previously unheard voices. The hope was expressed that the UN Security Council, at the apex of the UN system, will eventually reflect this diversity by becoming more inclusive.
31. Responding to a question from the moderator, audience members said that they would take with them from this panel, for training their diplomats: (a) that diplomats should listen, and not only to the words; (b) not to allow threat or coercion to creep into negotiation; (c) that political will is needed if negotiations are to be successful, and the importance of trying to see 'below the waterline' of the other side's position; (d) that knowledge of the subject matter is important, in combination with diplomatic skills.

Official Dinner with Chief Guest, Mr V Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs, India

Day 2

Panel 5: Reformed Multilateralism: Addressing contemporary global challenges

Moderator: Dr Yolanda Spies, Director, Oxford University Diplomatic Studies Programme, UK (YS)

Panellists:

Mr T.S. Tirumurti, Former Permanent Representative/Ambassador of India to the United Nations (TST)

Ms Sheila Sealy Monteith, President, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade, Jamaica (SSM)

Mr Tean Samnang, President, National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations, Cambodia (TS)

32. YS stressed the importance of multilateralism based on liberalism, developed by and with participation of a large number of states. Multilateralism has the value of levelling the playing field for diplomacy, giving small states a voice with large ones.
33. As SSM stressed in her intervention, today we have 193 UN Member States; an extensive web of international organisations; extensive processes, adjusted over many years; decision-making on the basis of consensus for the most part; a wide reach of multilateral institutions; and a UN that's irreplaceable because it has helped develop the international legal regime in many areas. The UN and multilateral system offer opportunities to bring to global attention the needs and interests of a multiplicity of countries, for global, participatory decision-making.
34. TS began his intervention with a proverb: "Whether elephants make love or make war, the grass underneath is trampled." Small states cherish multilateralism because they risk being damaged by the activities of larger states, whether those states are cooperating or competing. States can do more together than separately, particularly when united by consensus (as for example in ASEAN).
35. All agreed that multilateralism needs reform. In particular, the UN Security Council (UNSC) is diminished, because it's anachronistic. 70% of its agenda concerns Africa, but it has no credibility without African representation among the P5. UNSC reform is urgent, particularly as the UNSC now takes such a broad view of peace and security. Further, the question was raised whether non-Western interpretations of international law may undermine multilateralism, for example on non-intervention, human rights etc. It was observed that when some states abuse the law, others may follow, i.e. respect for the rule of law may diminish.
36. As TST discussed, the ineffectiveness of multilateralism has spawned plurilateral groups – but their downside is that they are led & dominated by the richer countries, offering less of a say for the Global South. Despite not being fully inclusive, the G20 offers a good model process-wise: it has all the ingredients for replication, if its membership is tweaked.
37. Multilateral fora are also important as a venue for bilateral and minilateral meetings and groupings. Care should be taken to avoid the risk that minilateralism is used for confrontation instead of cooperation.
38. It was asked whether the multilateral order is capable of changing unless compelled to do so by war. TST considered that while the UNSC needs reform, the changes it has made to date – vastly increasing its transparency and the capacity for more voices to be heard within it, greatly

broadening its agenda – demonstrate that it is on a long journey towards the UNSC that all would want, with changed membership and decision-making processes. TS considered that there may need to be more external pressure on UNSC before it will reform; YS that states missed an opportunity for reform at the end of the Cold War.

39. Despite its weaknesses, all the panel members recognised the strengths of multilateralism. Multilateralism gives states an opportunity to own their decisions. As SSM stressed, the UN Charter creates a vision of a world that's more equitable and based on the rule of law: we must keep trying to achieve that vision, because there's no alternative. We have to develop international regimes, with sanctions for those who do not adhere, and modalities and institutions for economic development, and more democracy in decision-making. YS concluded that we stick with multilateralism because there's nothing else we can do.

Panel 6: No Planet B: Moving from words to deeds

Moderator: Mr Ninad S Deshpande, Joint Secretary (Multilateral Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs, India (ND)

Panellists:

Mr Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator, India (SS)

Ms Greer Alblas, Director, Diplomatic Academy, Australia (GA)

Mr Manjeev Puri, Former Ambassador of India to Nepal, European Union and Belgium (MP)

40. [The Rapporteur missed most of this discussion due to the bureau meeting.]

41. The panel closed on a note of optimism, and with a call to mainstream climate change, economics, money and trade in diplomatic training; and to give diplomats plenty of opportunity for learning in the field as well as in the classroom. Ministries of Foreign Affairs worldwide need to engage with publics, not just with elites. Diplomats should use the organs of UN in new ways, while protecting the UN Charter.

IFDT Bazaar

42. The IFDT heard brief presentations from:

- Clingendael Academy, Netherlands (Mr Ron Ton)
- Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa Academy for Diplomatic Studies, Bahrain (Mr Yusuf Abdulwahab)
- Devawongse Varopakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand (Ms Thitiporn Chirasawadi)
- Diplomatic Academy, Australia (Mr Dave Bishop)
- Javier Pérez De Cuéllar Diplomatic Academy, Peru (Mr Raul Hidalgo)
- College of Europe, Belgium (Mr Cesare Zegretti with video from H.E. Federica Mogherini)
- Diplomatic Academy, Vienna (Ms Nadja Wozonig)
- Diplomatic Academy, Poland (Mr Bartosz Marcinkowski)

- Center for Education and Training, Indonesia (Mr Yudho Sasongko).

Panel 7: Tech-tonic Displacement: How is technology reshaping the world

Moderator: Mr Rahul Matthan, Partner, Trilegal India (RM)

Mr Pramod Varma, Chief Architect, Aadhaar & India Stack (Virtual) (PV)

Ms Kate Jones, Director, Centre for Political and Diplomatic Studies, UK (KJ)

Mr Ashutosh Chadha, Director and Country Head (India) Government Affairs & Public Policy, Microsoft (AC)

43. The panel provided an overview of technological change: it is revolutionising people's lives, making them safer, simpler and better. As PV described by reference to India's global public goods and global public infrastructure, technology brings unprecedented capacity for development. Internationally, as KJ quoted from a recent UK Foreign Affairs Committee report, "New and emerging technologies are fundamentally altering the nature of international relations and the conduct of diplomacy." At the same time, all dimensions of international relations are evident in the realm of technology, entailing both a pull towards globalism and a push towards national fragmentation in technology governance.
44. The panel discussed both the risks and the opportunities of new technology. Technology is developing much faster than regulation to manage it, at both national and international levels. Tech diplomacy involves new actors, notably the large multinational tech companies which are beginning to manifest diplomatic roles. There is therefore a need for a new multistakeholderism, one that involves all actors yet is efficient in making effective governance decisions. The governance framework for the digital revolution is now being shaped, both at national and international levels. Geopolitical tensions mean that we have to start from the framework we have, rather than trying to create wholly new institutions.
45. As AC observed, tech companies need to welcome regulation, particularly regulation that will help build trust. That does entail compromises on the part of companies. Just as companies need to lean in, so governments need to develop more coordination, both internally and across jurisdictions. Much more capacity is needed to understand and address today's tech governance challenges. Governments must lead on tech governance because ultimately it is governments – not companies – that have both the mandate to serve the public interest and accountability for doing so.
46. On a show of hands, only a few countries currently have tech diplomats or a dedicated tech team within their MFA; this is likely to change rapidly. There is a significant role for MFAs to play in tech governance, working together with domestic digital ministries. Diplomats need to bring their knowledge of core accepted international values and of the multilateral system to technology governance. They need to be able to see connections across aspects of the system, for example between technical standards organisations and the UN human rights system. If diplomats are not involved, the world risks bypassing the values and governance processes that all nations cherish, rooted in the UN Charter, UN human rights and other governance systems, as it creates new paradigms for tech governance.
47. There is scope for diplomats to think widely about tech governance: it involves not only multilateral initiatives and the security dimension, but bilateral partnerships such as the India/US bilateral initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies; new trade arrangements at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels; and new potential for developments in fields such as telecoms,

space and the environment. All diplomats should be equipped to deal with disinformation, and ready to engage with initiatives such as a push for global media literacy.

48. For diplomatic training, all this means combining a strong grounding of both traditional diplomatic skills and in-depth knowledge of multilateral governance on the one hand, with new subject-specific knowledge on the other. Graduates should be encouraged to obtain more cross-disciplinary knowledge during their studies where possible. Above all, diplomats must be empowered to think creatively and to be agile in addressing new developments at pace.

Panel 8: Leveraging Soft Power: Bridging geographies and connecting minds

Moderator: Ms Palki Sharma Upadhyay, Managing Editor, Network18, India (PSU)

Panellists:

Mr Ajay Bisaria, Former High Commissioner of India to Canada (AB)

Dr Sonal Mansingh, Padma Vibhushan, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha (SM)

Dr Orsolya Pacsay-Tomassich, President, Hungarian Diplomatic Academy (OPT)

49. The panel discussed the very rich potential forms of soft power, from yoga, to cricket, to tech unicorns, to vaccine dissemination, to music and dance. AB stressed how India's soft power today is rooted in its technological capacities. SM discussed her rich international cultural experiences as an internationally renowned practitioner of Indian dance. In her view, the universality of emotions brings all people together through the arts, in ways that nothing else does. OPT described Hungary's soft power, including as inventor of the ballpoint pen and the first version of Excel, as well as through bringing students from all over the world to Hungary for their studies.
50. Yet, as AB pointed out, soft power has limitations. Hard power is also important; but the more effectively states use soft power, the less they will have to use hard power. Use of the media can be an exercise both of soft power and of hard power: as AB observed, the weaponization of information can be a use of hard power. In the Russia/Ukraine conflict, for example, information is being used as a weapon of hard power.
51. In OPT's view, Asian states are well ahead of Europe in leveraging soft power. She gave the example of China's Silk Road. But other panellists observed that too much government involvement can have a weakening effect on soft power. Governments can facilitate, but effective soft power relies on an all-of-society approach, particularly in a democracy.
52. A question was asked about the difference between cultural diplomacy and the exercise of soft power. In response, AB observed that soft power is the counterpoint to hard power.
53. Peace deals are cemented by people as well as, or more than, their leaders, therefore soft power is essential in overcoming conflict and building relationships. As Gandhi said, power based on love is more effective than power based on fear. The moderator concluded by noting that soft power is a potent and effective tool.

Evening:

Cultural Performance

Address by Chief Guest, Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Culture, Ms Meenakashi Lekhi

Vote of Thanks by Joint Secretary (SSIFS)

Concluding Dinner

The two days of conference discussions were followed by two days of cultural visits:

Thursday 17 November: Visit to Agra (Taj Mahal)

Friday 18 November: Visit to India International Trade Fair (IITF), National Crafts Museum, Red Fort

Rapporteur's report provided by Ms Kate Jones, Centre for Political and Diplomatic Studies, www.cpds.training